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An Iron Age and Roman settlement at Mawsley New Village, Great Cransley, Kettering

by

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological excavation at Housing Areas 6C/6D, Mawsley New Village, west of Kettering, prior to residential development. The excavations recorded a long sequence of activity from the early Iron Age, through the Roman period and into the early Anglo-Saxon period. The earliest features consisted of a short length of pit alignment that probably dates to the early Iron Age. Subsequent open settlement consisted of a single roundhouse located on a promontory, affording clear views of the surrounding landscape. In the late Iron Age (1st century BC) a farmstead was established, consisting of paired enclosures. The farmstead was modified and occupied continuously until the mid-2nd century AD, with a succession from timber roundhouse construction to a stone-founded roundhouse. The material culture indicated that the farmstead was modest in status, with an emphasis towards pastoralism during the Roman period. The enclosure was infilled during the later 2nd century, and the upper fill contained a special 'closure' deposit that incorporated later 2nd-century jewellery and weaponry, including a silver wheel-shaped clasp from a necklace, paralleled in the Snettisham hoard, alongside iron weapons. The excavated evidence suggested a shift in settlement, with new ditch systems laid out, including a trackway that crossed the previous settlement. Sparse finds from the later Roman period suggest that settlement may have continued in close proximity until the 4th century AD. An early Anglo-Saxon prone burial was located near to the stone roundhouse. The burial appeared to be aligned to the later ditch system, suggesting the deliberate re-use of the Roman site for burial, a widely reported mortuary practice from this period.

Introduction

Excavations were undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in 2007 for George Wimpey East Midlands (now part of Taylor Wimpey) during construction of a new village at Cransley Lodge (NGR SP 811764, Fig 1), following a series of field surveys and trial trench evaluations (Nicholls 1999; Slatcher 2000; Stephens 1999; Young 2000). This article relates specifically to work at the NE end of the development, where previous work had confirmed the presence of Roman enclosures and associated ditches (Young 2000; HER No 9828). For the purpose of discharging the archaeological condition attached to the planning consent, open area excavation of *c* 1.07ha was undertaken within two house construction phases (6C and 6D), located either side of a field boundary aligned NW–SE (Fig 3).

The published report is a condensed version of the full report (Harvey 2012), which contains full specialist reports and a wider range of plans and finds illustrations. It is available through the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record and online through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

Location, topography and geology

The site was located 2km SW of Great Cransley and 6km west of Kettering, occupying two fields on relatively flat ground, gently sloping W to E from 128m aOD to 123m aOD. Topographically, the site lies on the watershed between two streams which flow NE towards Kettering to join the River Ise, which flows south to join the Nene. The underlying geology has been mapped as glacial clays overlying Stamford member sandstone and siltstone. The excavation recorded three bands of geology on site. An upper deposit of mid yellow-brown clay containing chalk and flint was recorded on the highest ground along the NW side of the site. This overlaid green-brown clay containing occasional chalk inclusions and marine fossils, which covered 70% of the total area of the site. This deposit overlay mid yellow-brown clayey sand that was exposed in the east corner of the site where the downward slope gradient became steeper.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the proposed new village was identified in an evaluation brief prepared by Northamptonshire Heritage (Northamptonshire County Council) and a subsequent desk-based assessment prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (Kidd 1999; Slatcher 1999).

Aerial photography by the National Mapping of the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (RCHME) had located a group of cropmark enclosures, probably Roman or Iron Age, at the SW end of the site (HER No.

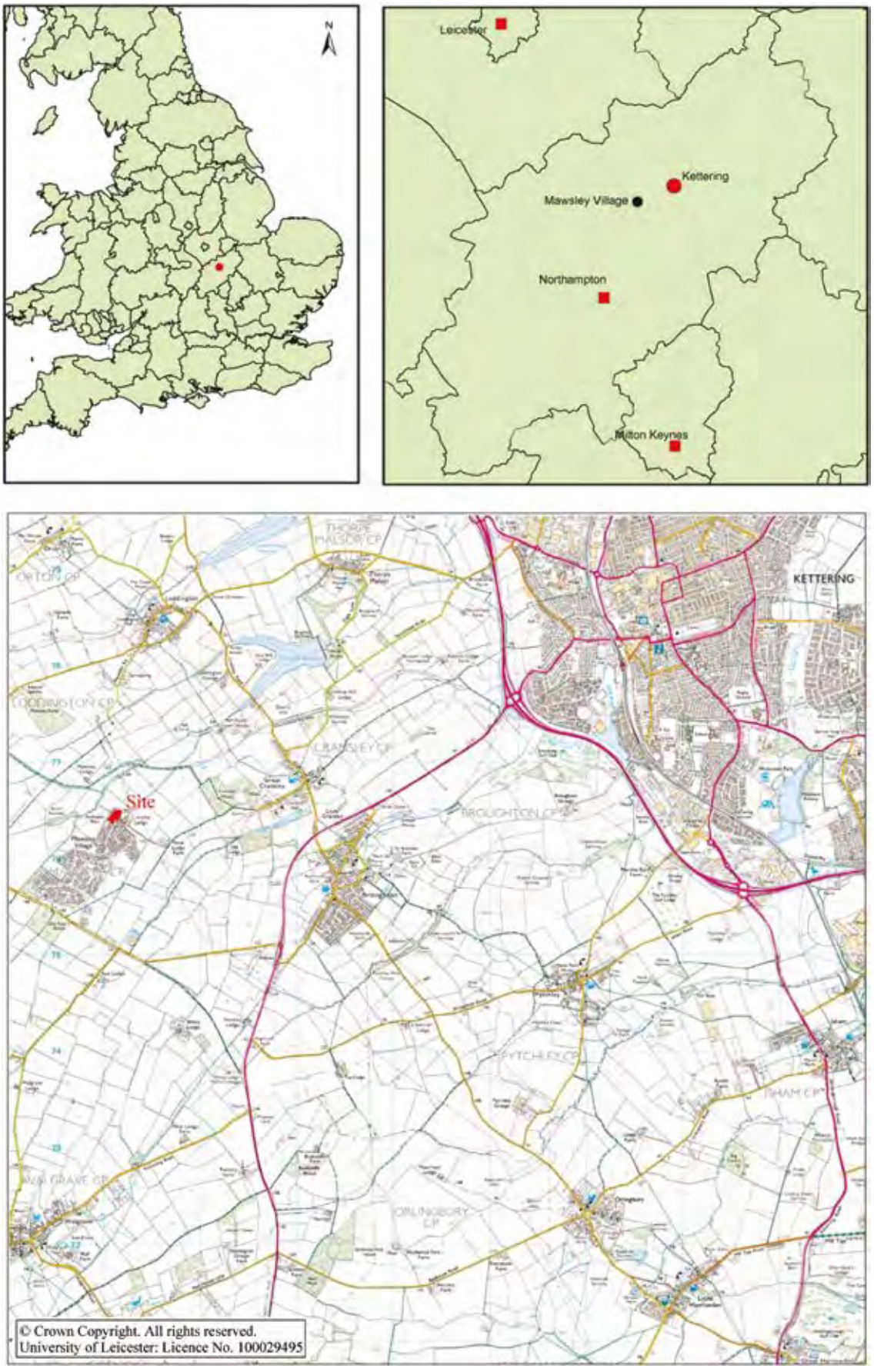


Fig 1 Site location plan

3702). Iron Age and Roman finds were recorded within the vicinity of the site during the 19th century although their precise location on the ground is now uncertain (3703). Approximately 600m east of the site, cropmarks of a possible Iron Age site have been identified (5883). The deserted medieval village of Mawsley was located 300m west of the site (3701).

Fieldwalking undertaken across the majority of the proposed development area between September and November 1999 produced largely negative results. A single sherd of late Iron Age pottery was found at the SW end of the site close to the cropmarks (Slatcher 2000, 9). These areas were evaluated by JSAC but no evidence for any associated features was recorded and it was suggested that recent ploughing may have destroyed any buried archaeology.

A geophysical survey by GSB Prospection over a large proportion of the proposed new village highlighted three main potential archaeological sites and a number of further anomalies. Two of the sites were located in close proximity at the SW end of the development area, immediately NW of the cropmarks located from the aerial photography (Fig 2).

The geophysical survey registered ditch-type responses consisting of two clusters of circular and semi-circular features, one of them enclosed by a triangular arrangement of ditches. The third site was located at the NE end of the development area, which was divided in two by the modern field boundary separating Fields 5 and 6 (Fig 3). The geophysical survey results suggested numerous ditch and pit-type responses reflecting a complex of enclosures. Weaker ditch and pit-type anomalies were apparent to the NE that suggested further enclosed activity extending beyond the study area (Nicholls 1999; Stephens 1999; Nicholls 2000, fig 2). Both clusters of geophysical anomalies at the SW end of the development area were subject to evaluation in late 1999. Evaluation of the unenclosed cluster of features did produce positive results that closely matched the geophysical survey (Slatcher 2000, 9). However, no evidence of the supposedly triangular enclosed settlement to the E was recorded despite evaluation on two separate occasions. It was suggested that the archaeological remains had been destroyed by ploughing between the undertaking of the geophysical survey and the evaluation (Slatcher 2000, 10; Young 2000, 17).

Evaluation of the enclosed site at the NE end of the development undertaken in May 2000 produced mixed results. The NW side of the enclosure and potential internal divisions within it were recorded and closely matched the anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey. The pottery recovered suggested that the activity mainly dated between the late Iron Age and early Roman period with later Roman pottery present in smaller quantities. However the trenches that targeted the NE side of this enclosure and the proposed entranceway on the SE side produced negative results (Young 2000, 15). It was noted that the site conditions were generally wet during the evaluation which may have hampered the identification of archaeological deposits within these trenches. A trench also targeted anomalies in the NE corner of the site, and revealed a dense concentration of ditches and gullies. These features provided the same spread of dating between the late Iron Age and early Roman period, perhaps suggesting continued occupation throughout this period.

Subsequent excavations of the unenclosed site at the SW end of the area by Thames Valley Archaeological Services during the winter of 2000–01 did reveal six ring gully structures as suggested by the geophysical survey. The precise nature of the structures is unclear, although the simplest explanation would be to see them as successive rebuilding of roundhouses within a shifting open settlement pattern. This idea is supported by the radiocarbon dating that showed that the features were not all contemporary, dating between 300–100BC (Hull and Preston 2002, 17). A series of straight parallel ditches aligned E–W were also recorded during the excavation that clearly truncated the Iron Age settlement. The function of these linear features is unclear although they are likely to relate to a specific type of agricultural activity. Although the ditches contained similar pottery fragments to the ring gullies it was clear that they did not relate to the Iron Age activity, with the finds representing residual material from the truncated gullies (2002, 19).

Methodology

The areas to be excavated, which totalled 1.6ha, had been defined within the archaeological brief drawn up by Northamptonshire County Council. However, changes to the site boundaries, the exclusion of the field boundary that was maintained within the development and partial construction of the road system prior the project commencement meant that only 1.1ha was subject to archaeological investigation (Fig 3). This work was undertaken over two phases that were separated by the field boundary that runs across the site. Excavations within Area 6C (the southern area, within Field 6) were undertaken between April–July 2007 and covered an area of 0.66ha. Excavations within Area 6D (the northern area, within Field 5) was excavated between September–November 2007 and covered an area of 0.41ha.

The two areas were stripped of topsoil and overburden using a 360° tracked machine fitted with a toothless bucket, in order to reveal the upper archaeological horizon. During the stripping phase areas of recent truncation were identified that included prior topsoil removal and subsequent wheel rutting along the proposed road line within Area 6C. This included further reduction of the natural ground level on the SE side of the side of the site. A large sewer trench was also recorded through the centre of the site.

Site Chronology

The results of the excavation confirmed the pattern of enclosure and ditch systems highlighted by the geophysical survey, including the elements that were absent during the evaluation phase.

It was clear from the recorded evidence that the excavation plan represented a complex sequence of archaeological activity reflecting a changing landscape over a prolonged period of time. Stratigraphic analysis combined

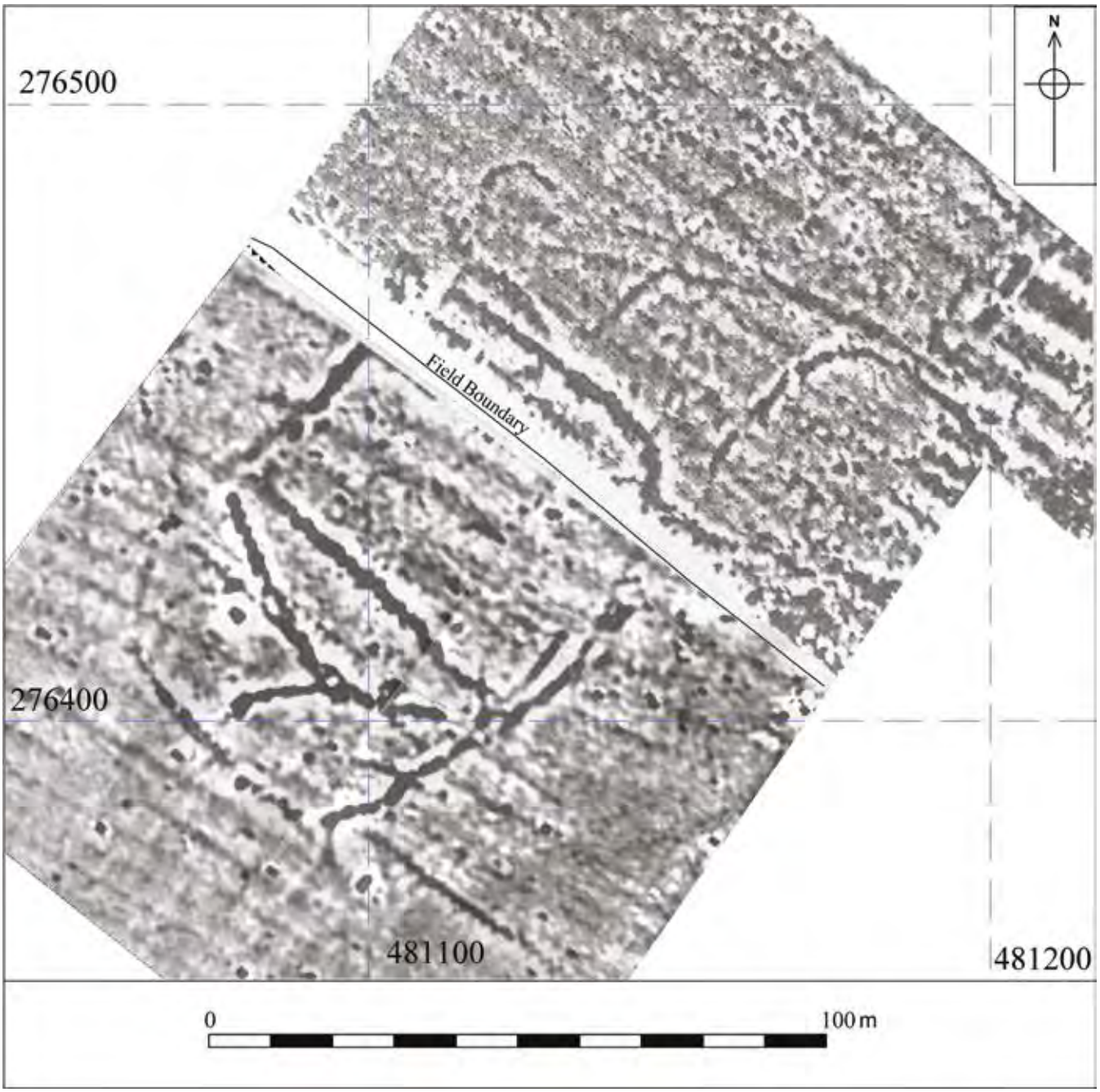


Fig 2 Combined geophysical surveys showing results from Fields 5 and 6
(from Stephens 1999; Nicholls 2000)

with the analysis of the pottery (see Johnson in Harvey 2012) has informed the establishment of the chronological sequence which is summarised below in Table 1 and discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

Phase 1A: early to middle Iron Age boundaries and a roundhouse

Introduction of land boundaries

The earliest activity was a 40m length of pit alignment, aligned NW–SE and presumed to have extended beyond the excavated area in both directions (PG1, Figs 5 and 6). The 12 regularly-spaced pits were square with rounded corners, varying from 1.2–2.0m across and from 0.35–0.60m deep, depending on the degree of truncation. Preservation was better towards the SE end where the spacing between pits was about 1.4m, increasing to 2.0m towards the NW end. The only material find from the pit fills was a flint core indicative of late Bronze Age flint technology (L Cooper in Harvey 2012). The final silting of some of the pits contained a few sherds of Roman pottery dating to the mid-late 1st century AD, indicating that some pits were still visible as earthwork depressions at that time.

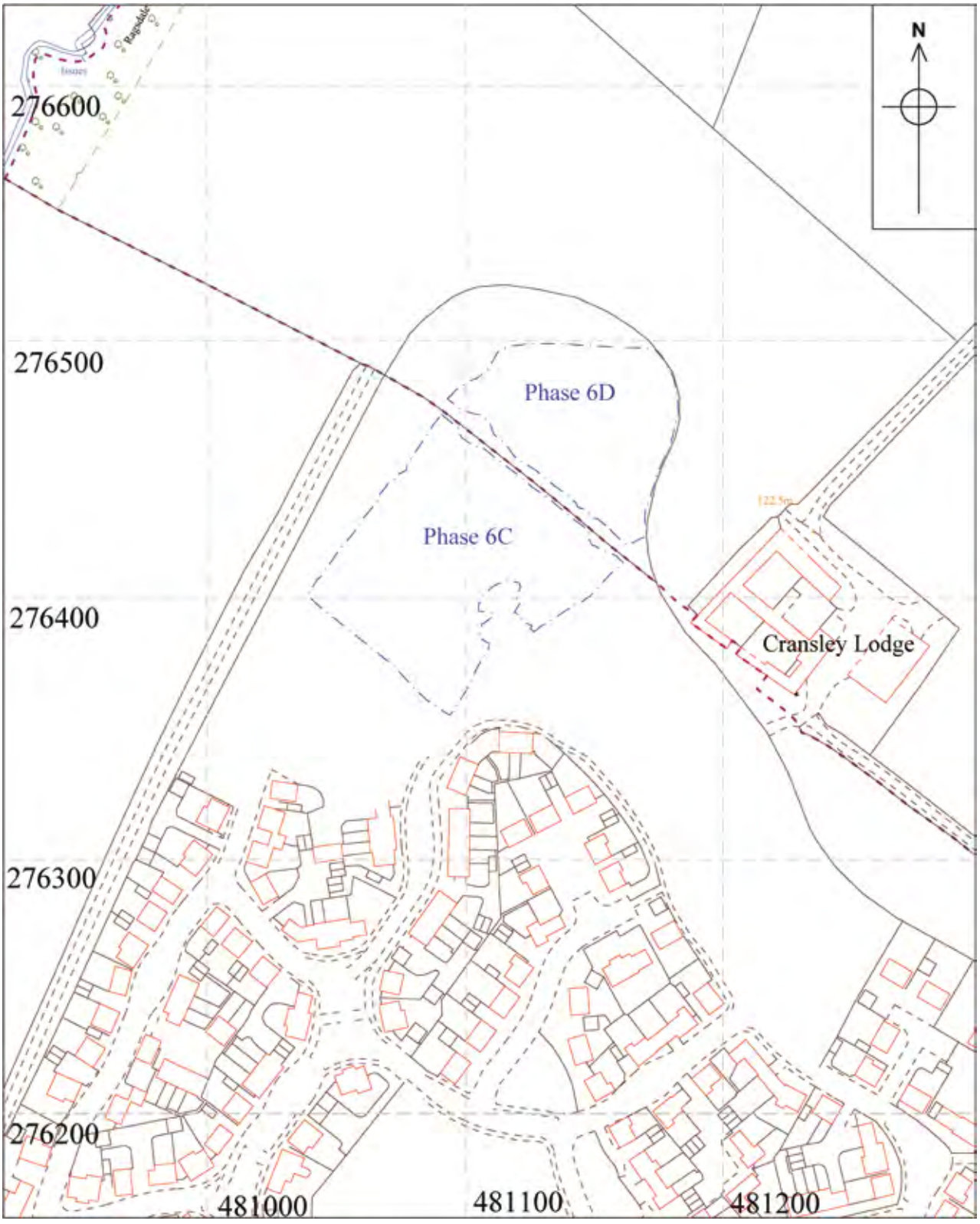


Fig 3 The excavated areas within housing areas 6C and 6D

Possible open settlement

Roundhouse R1 (DG1) was located to the north of the pit alignment, on a pronounced ridge. It comprised an annular gully, 12.25m diameter, with an entrance on the east side, 4.3m wide (Fig 5 and Fig 7). No clear structural elements were observed and although the bulbous gully terminals might indicate that these were post-settings, no evidence of posts were observed within the excavated sections of the gully. A small assemblage of scored ware

Table1: Summary of site phasing

Phase/Period	Description
Late Prehistoric to Roman settlement	
1a Early to Middle Iron Age	**Establishment of formal boundaries:** A length of pit alignment Open settlement: one roundhouse
1b Late Iron Age settlement (1st century BC)	**Enclosed settlement** At least one roundhouse Associated stock enclosure
2 Belgic settlement (Late Iron Age) (early to mid-1st century AD)	**Reorganisation of settlement**: An enclosure with adjoining annexe Up to three possible roundhouses.
3 Early Roman settlement (middle to late 1st century AD)	**Further subdivision of the annexe**: Two new roundhouses, New enclosure Ditch system to the NE
4 Early-middle Roman settlement (late 1st to mid-2nd century AD)	**Rectilinear enclosure** Stone-founded roundhouse Two wells and other structures. Roman burial in N enclosure ditch
5 Middle to late Roman settlement (2nd to 4th centuries AD)	Enclosure ditch mainly backfilled **New field system established** Special deposits within upper fill of S enclosure ditch (later 2nd century) 3rd and 4th century: Occasional pottery and coin deposition
Medieval Activity	
6 Anglo-Saxon (6th–7th centuries AD)	Prone burial within early Roman ditch
7 Medieval	Open field system: ridge and furrow

pottery and animal bone was recovered from the north terminal (DG1) but was sparse elsewhere. The absence of Belgic-style and early Roman pottery, and its distance from the other roundhouses and the late Iron Age enclosures, suggest this feature may have been part of an earlier phase of unenclosed settlement.

Although size cannot be a definitive method of chronologically dating roundhouses, Roundhouse R1 was notably larger than others recorded on the site (see below) and similar in size to the middle Iron Age roundhouses recorded at the neighbouring settlement at Mawsley, Phase 3B (Hull and Preston 2002, 5), dating between the 3rd–1st century BC, where the external diameters ranged between 13–15m. The Phase 3B roundhouses were of double ring construction, comprising a shallow outer gully and a deeper inner wall slot, which was subsequently replaced by a larger single wall trench. The bulbous nature of the terminals of Roundhouse 1, combined with the lack of any other structural elements, may suggest that the recorded gully also represents a single wall trench with larger posts placed at the entrance, and therefore similar in form to those from the previous excavations. (There is also the possibility that this was a ring gully surrounding a roundhouse for which no structural remains had survived, as is typical for a majority of the excavated roundhouses in Northamptonshire. The roundhouse itself would therefore have been smaller, *c* 10m in diameter. A Chapman pers comm)

Phase1B: Late Iron Age settlement (1st century BC)

Enclosed Settlement

Probably within the 1st century BC, a small farmstead comprising two enclosures was established immediately to the south of Roundhouse R1 (Fig 5) and continued to be occupied until at least the mid-2nd century AD, with modifications. The N enclosure (Enclosure 1, DG 2 and DG3, Fig 5) was the more substantial of the two. It was originally sub-square in plan, measuring *c* 50m by 60m. However only the SW side of the enclosure survived in its original form with ditches generally up to 1.75m wide (up to 2.45m where re-cut) and 0.95m deep (Fig 9, S4 & S6). It overlay the pit alignment but was also aligned NW–SW. A narrow entrance lay at the west corner of the enclosure, 2.7m wide, towards one edge of which was a square posthole 493 containing lumps of ironstone, presumably relating to a gate structure. The original cut of the enclosure on the NE and SE sides was largely destroyed by the re-cutting for subsequent phases and so the exact nature of the original entrance on the east side is uncertain. Only the south terminal was excavated, the other was hidden beneath the field boundary; although it was clearly much wider. There was no indication of buildings within Enclosure 1; the only features associated with this phase being a pit 12, the base of which was lined on both sides with blocks of ironstone, and a shallow pit 241 (Fig 5). Scored ware pottery was recovered from the early fills of the enclosure ditch, and the earliest cut of the ditch at the

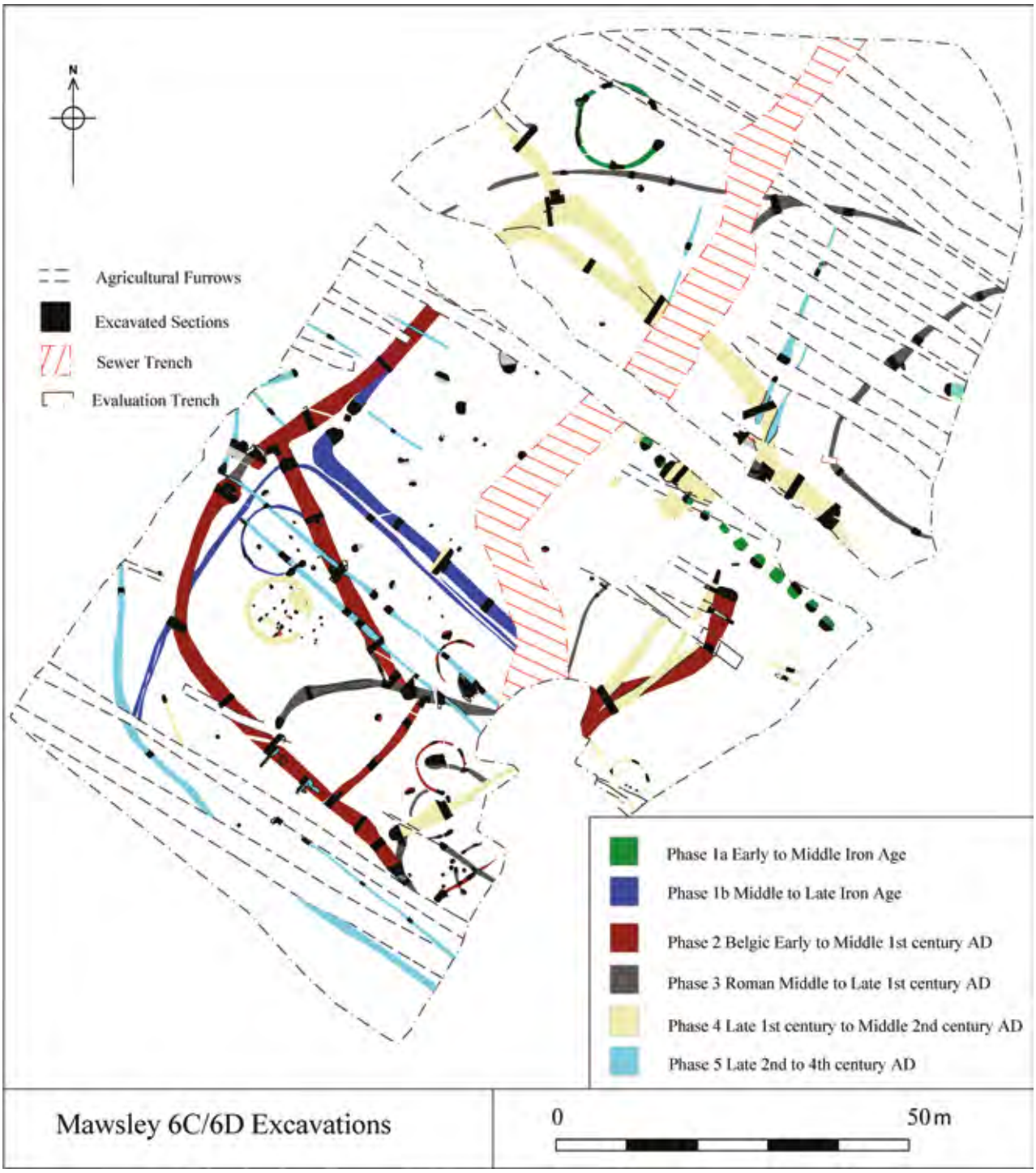


Fig 4 Mawsley excavation: general plan

north corner of the enclosure also contained an iron bow brooch of Late La Tene type, indicating a date in the late 1st century BC. The lack of Belgic-style pottery indicated that this early phase of the enclosure did not extend far into the 1st century AD.

The NW and SW sides of Enclosure 1 formed a right-angle, and this was mirrored by the NE and NW sides of the adjacent enclosure (Enclosure 2, DG4 and DG5), with preserved sides *c* 42m long and ditches up to 0.9m wide and 0.36m deep that showed evidence of a re-cut in places (Fig 9, S.5).

Enclosure 2 contained a single roundhouse towards its north corner (R2, DG6, Fig 5 and Fig 8), demarcated by a ring gully 9.8m in diameter and 0.2m deep. The entrance was to the SE but the gully terminals were truncated; a possible doorway was suggested by postholes 154 and 156 (SG1), one (154) with post-packing. Within the structure there four shallow postholes (SG2). Scored ware pottery

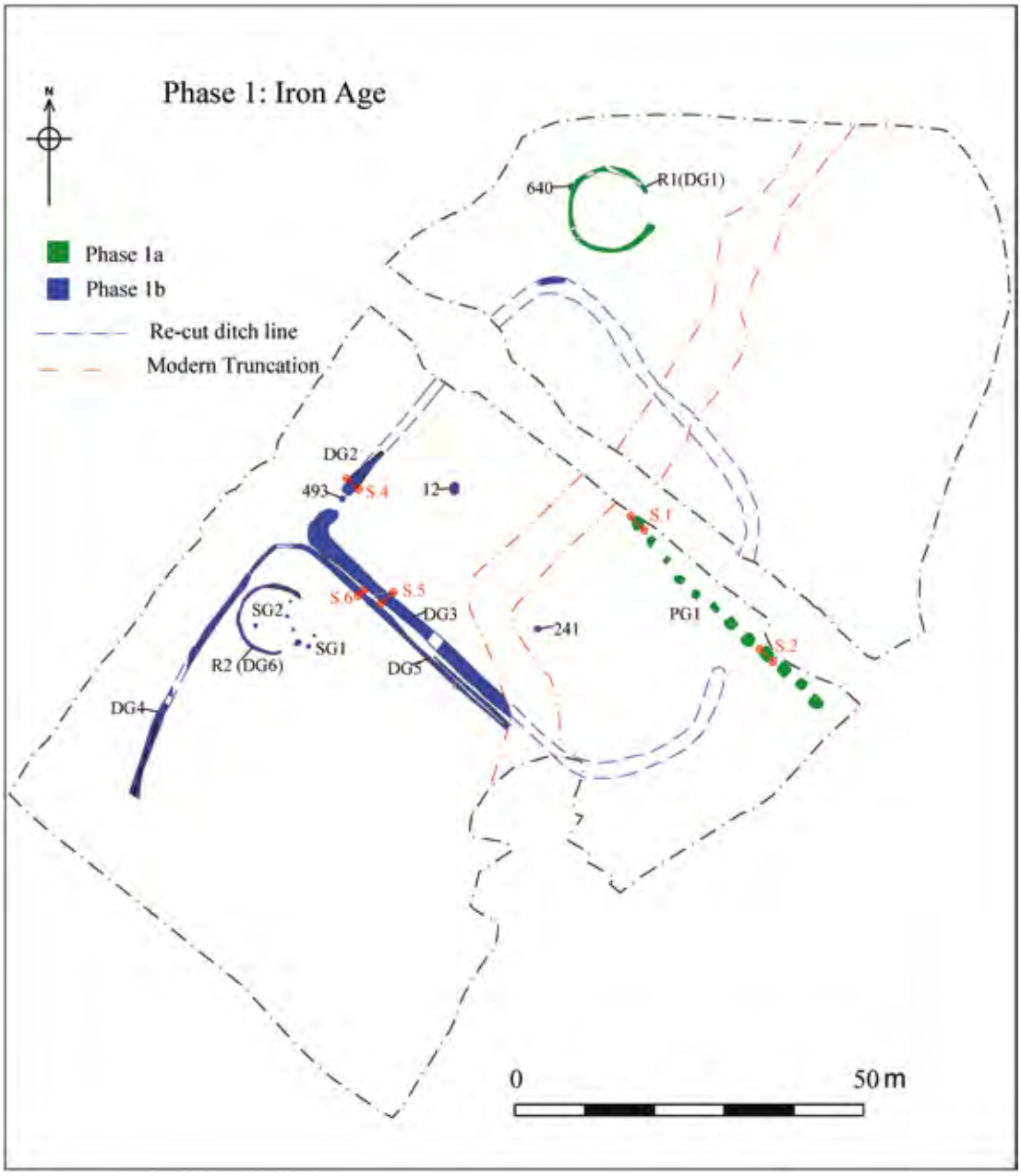


Fig 5 Phase 1: Iron Age pit alignment and subsequent farmstead

was recovered from the gully and posthole fills whilst 154 also contained some Belgic-style pottery possibly suggesting some overlap into the early-middle 1st century AD, if this feature was contemporary with the building.

Phase 2: Belgic enclosure and roundhouses (early–mid 1st century AD)

Settlement reorganisation

The enclosure system was reorganised in the early to middle 1st century AD (Fig 10). The shallow Enclosure 2 was infilled and the south end of Enclosure 1 was remodelled over that area to incorporate an annexe. The new line of the SW ditch of Enclosure 1 (DG7, Fig 12, S.7) was no longer parallel with the pit alignment and, after a distance of 40m, swung abruptly E to preserve the existing position of the east entrance (DG8, Fig 6, S.3; Fig 12, S.8) with the narrow west entrance now lost. The enclosure ditch was generally 1.7m wide and up to 1.0m deep, with the variations caused by the truncated ground level in the SE part of the site. The annexe was enclosed by a curving ditch (DG9, Figs 10 and 12, S.9–10, Fig 15, S.16) which was traced SE for a distance of 70m before being truncated by a plough furrow. The east end of the annexe was truncated by a modern sewer, but may have been partly defined by the narrow linear ditch DG11 (Fig

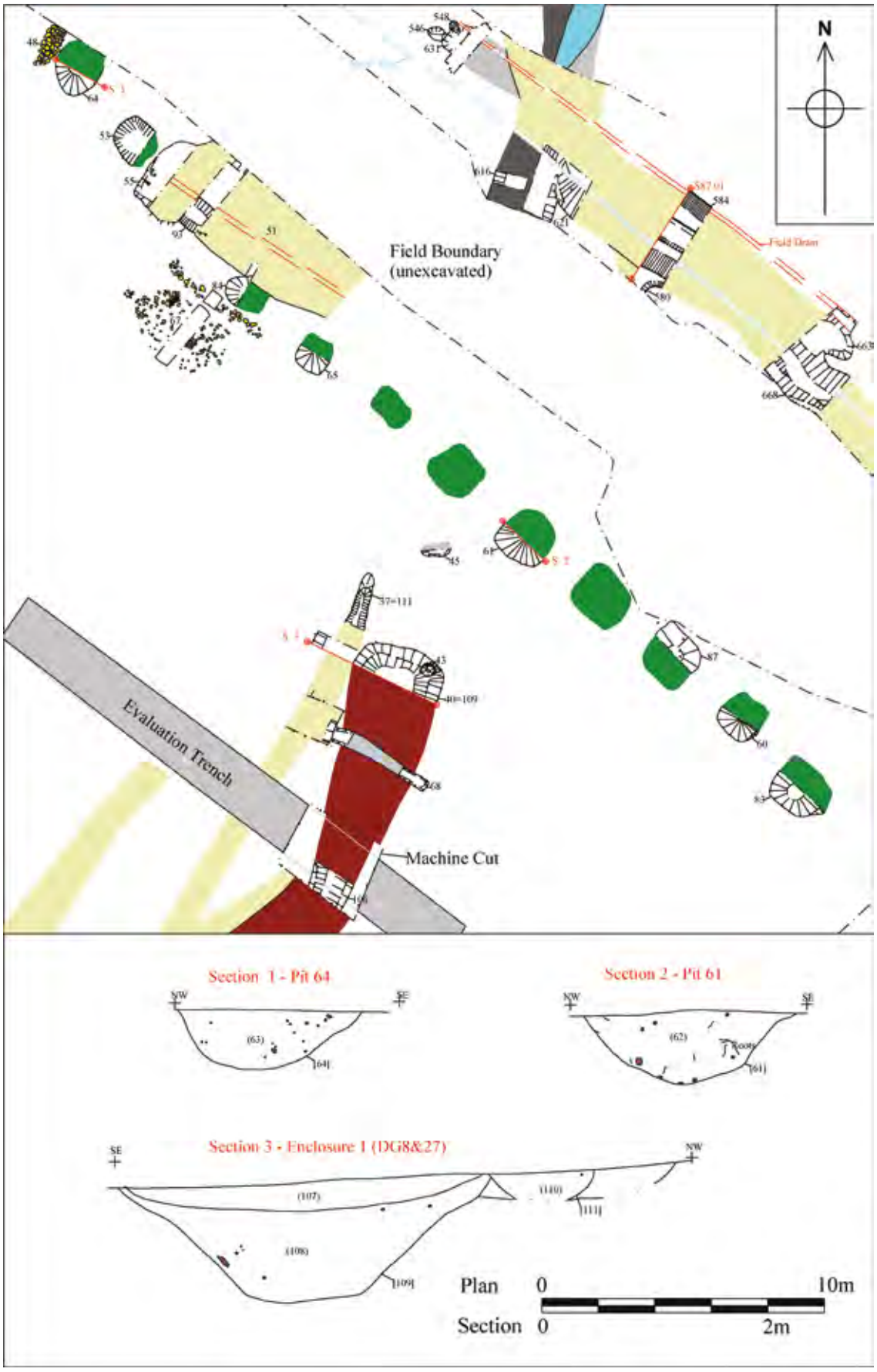


Fig 6 Features at the SE entrance of Enclosure 1, and sections of PG1 and DG8

Fig 7 Roundhouse R1 (DG1), looking SW

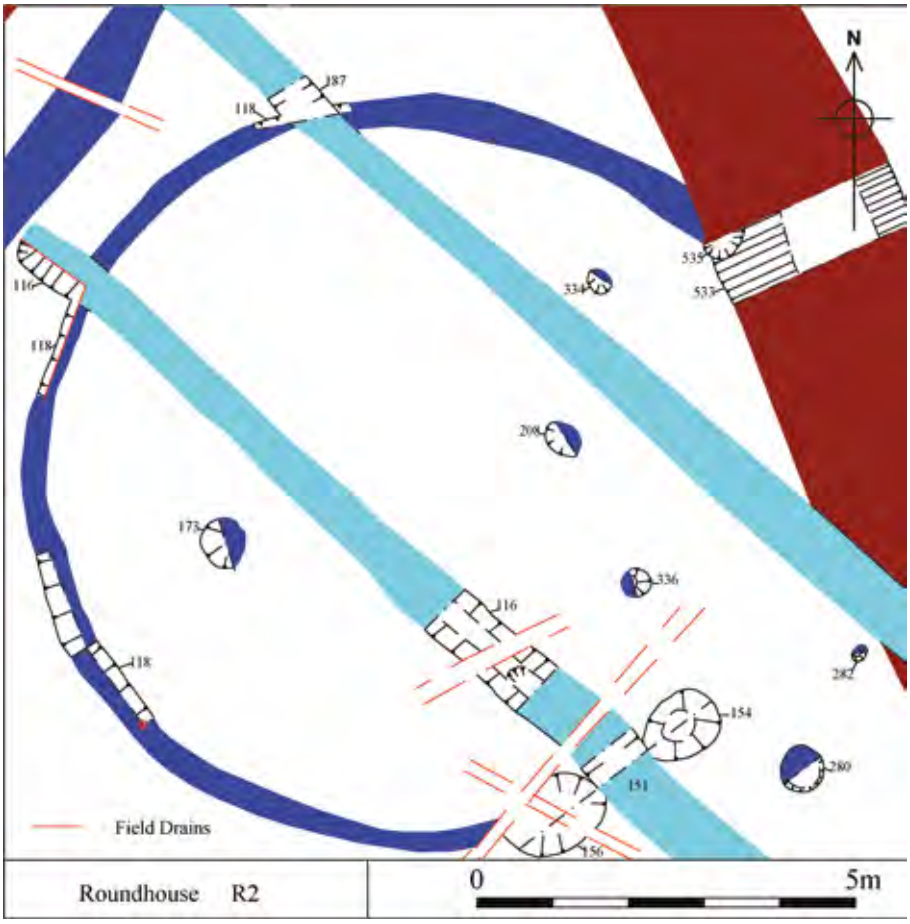


Fig 8 Roundhouse R2 (DG6; SG1 and SG2)

10, S.12), projecting NE at right-angles. The annexe was subdivided by a linear ditch DG10 (Fig 10, S.11), the west portion being accessed by a single entrance 2.5m wide.

The pottery from the ditch fills indicates that the enclosure in this form was established and in use during the early to mid-1st century AD, with groups of Belgic-style material dominating the fills of DG7 and occurring in the primary fills of DG10 and DG8, particularly in the terminal. The primary and secondary fills of many of the ditch sections contained Roman pottery of mid-late 1st and earlier-mid 2nd century date, suggesting that they were kept clean and regularly recut, and no Belgic-style pottery was recovered from the NE section of the enclosure circuit within excavation Area 6D. The vast majority of the pottery recovered from the annexe ditch DG9 also dates from the mid-late 1st century AD through to the middle of the 2nd century, indicating that it, too, was maintained.

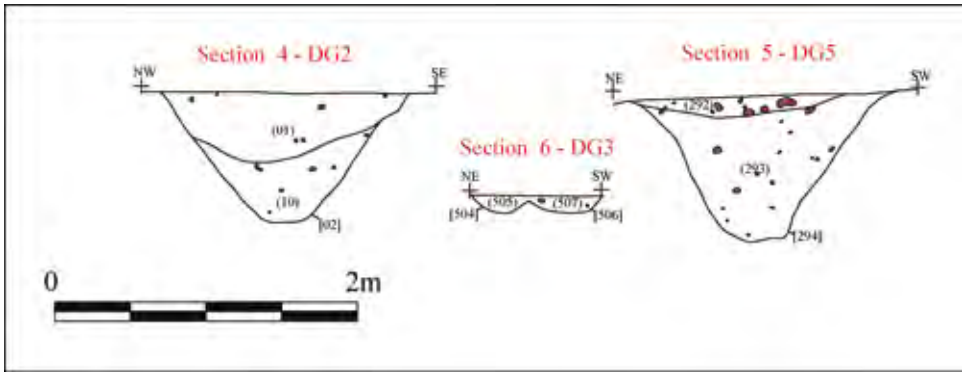


Fig 9 Ditch sections for Enclosure 1 and Enclosure 2 (DG2, DG3 and DG5)

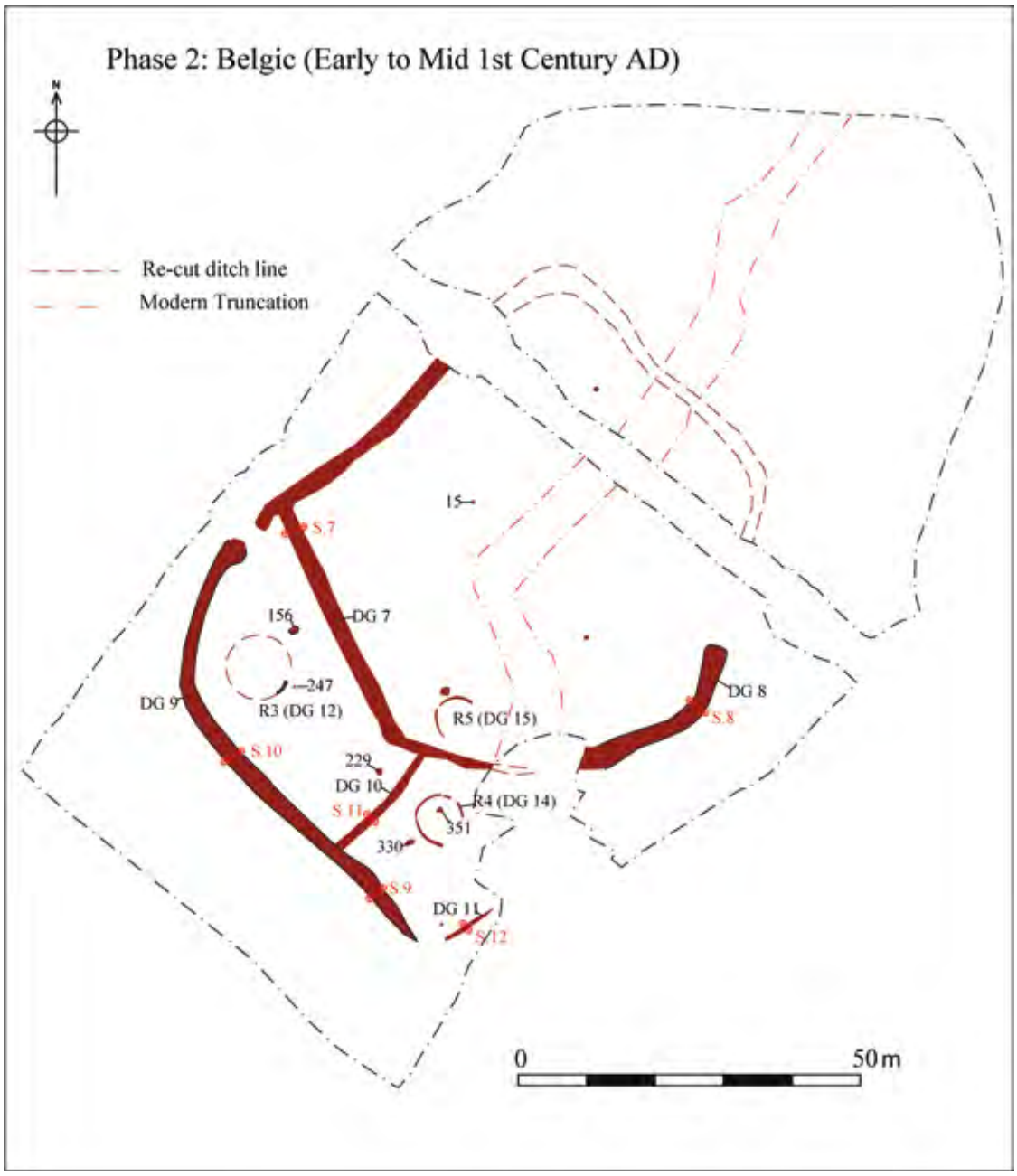


Fig 10 Phase 2: Belgic enclosure and roundhouses (early to mid-1st century AD)

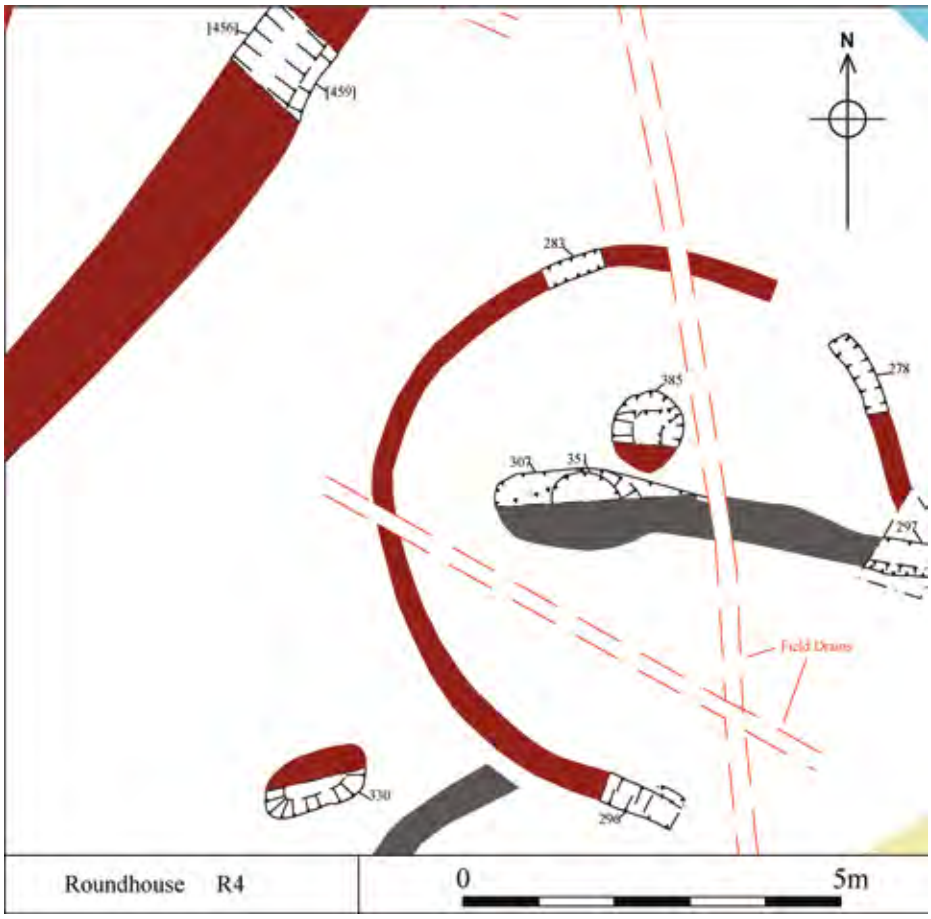


Fig 11 Roundhouse R4 (DG14)

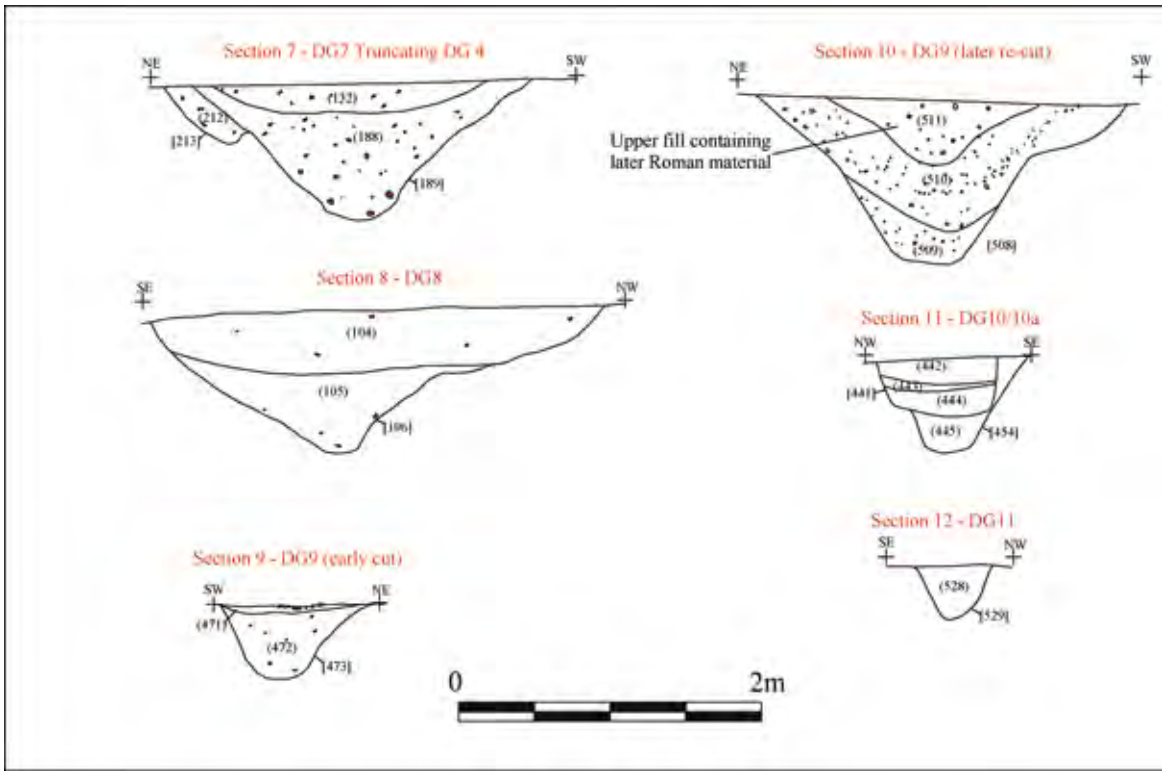


Fig 12 Sections of late Iron Age ditch systems (DG7, DG8, DG9, DG10/10a, DG11 and DG12)

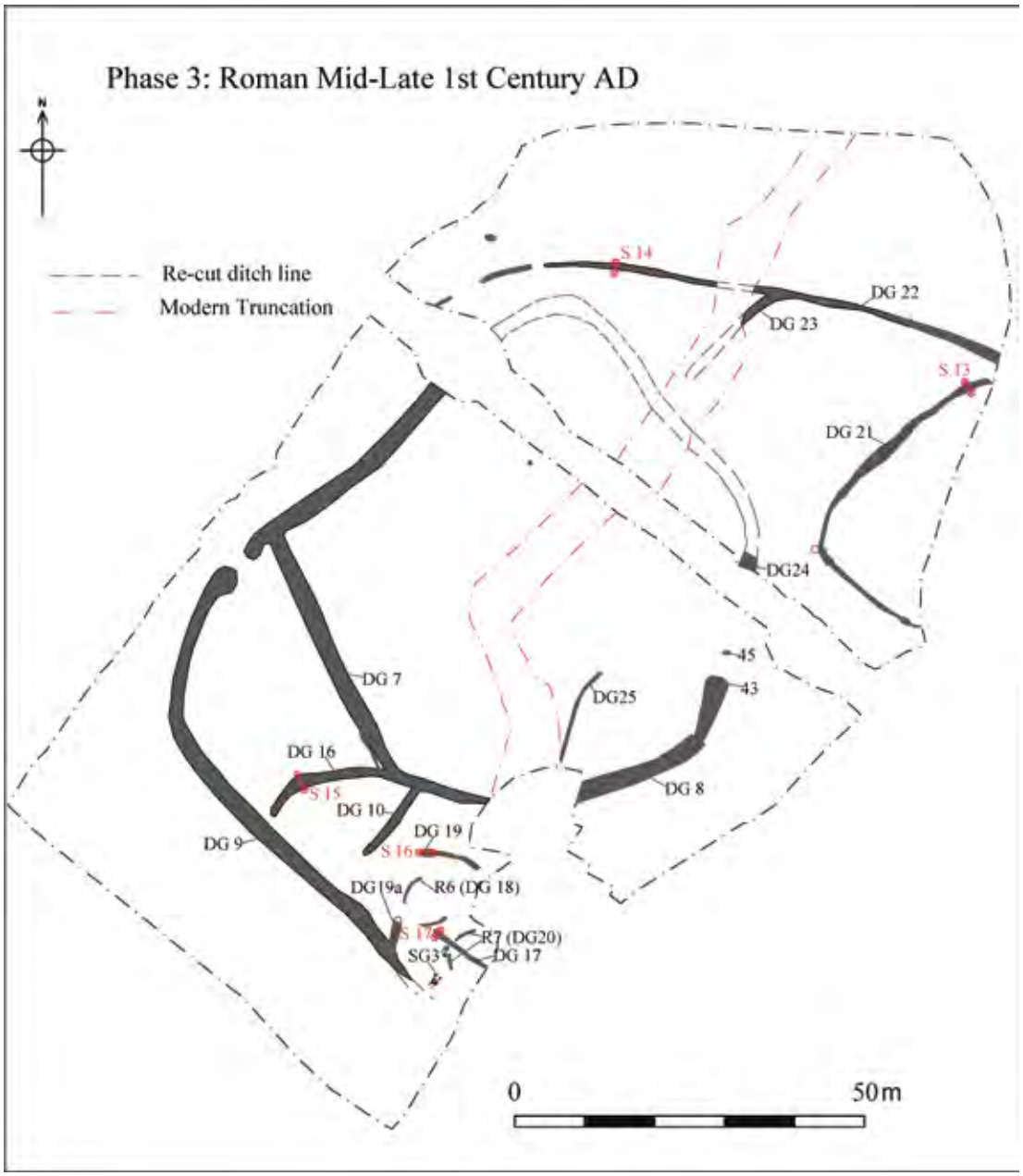


Fig 13 Phase 3: Early Roman settlement enclosure (mid to late 1st century AD)

The NW part of the annexe contained the partial remains of a possible roundhouse (R3, DG12; Fig 10), consisting of a short section of curvilinear gully, together with adjacent posthole 247 and two pits 156 and 229, all of which contained Belgic-style pottery. The south part of the annexe also contained a roundhouse, R4 (DG14; Fig 10 and Fig 11) demarked by an annular gully 7.7m in diameter and up to 0.18m deep, with a possible SE entrance. It contained a single internal posthole 351 and an associated external pit 330, both of which contained Belgic-style pottery. The main enclosure itself remained largely empty of features except for a small semi-circular gully (R5, DG15; Fig 10), 6.3m diameter and 0.15m deep, and adjacent pit 249 that, together with pit 15 towards the centre of the enclosure, contained Belgic-style pottery. It is uncertain whether the gully was the truncated remains of a roundhouse or the remains of a stock pen.

Phase 3: Early Roman settlement enclosure (mid to late 1st century AD)

Settlement expansion

Modifications to Enclosure 1 and the surrounding area were largely confined to the south part of the annexe and to the NE of the complex, and these were identified mainly by the occurrence of early Roman pottery dating to the mid to late 1st century AD, rather than Belgic-style material. The south part of the annexe lacked any

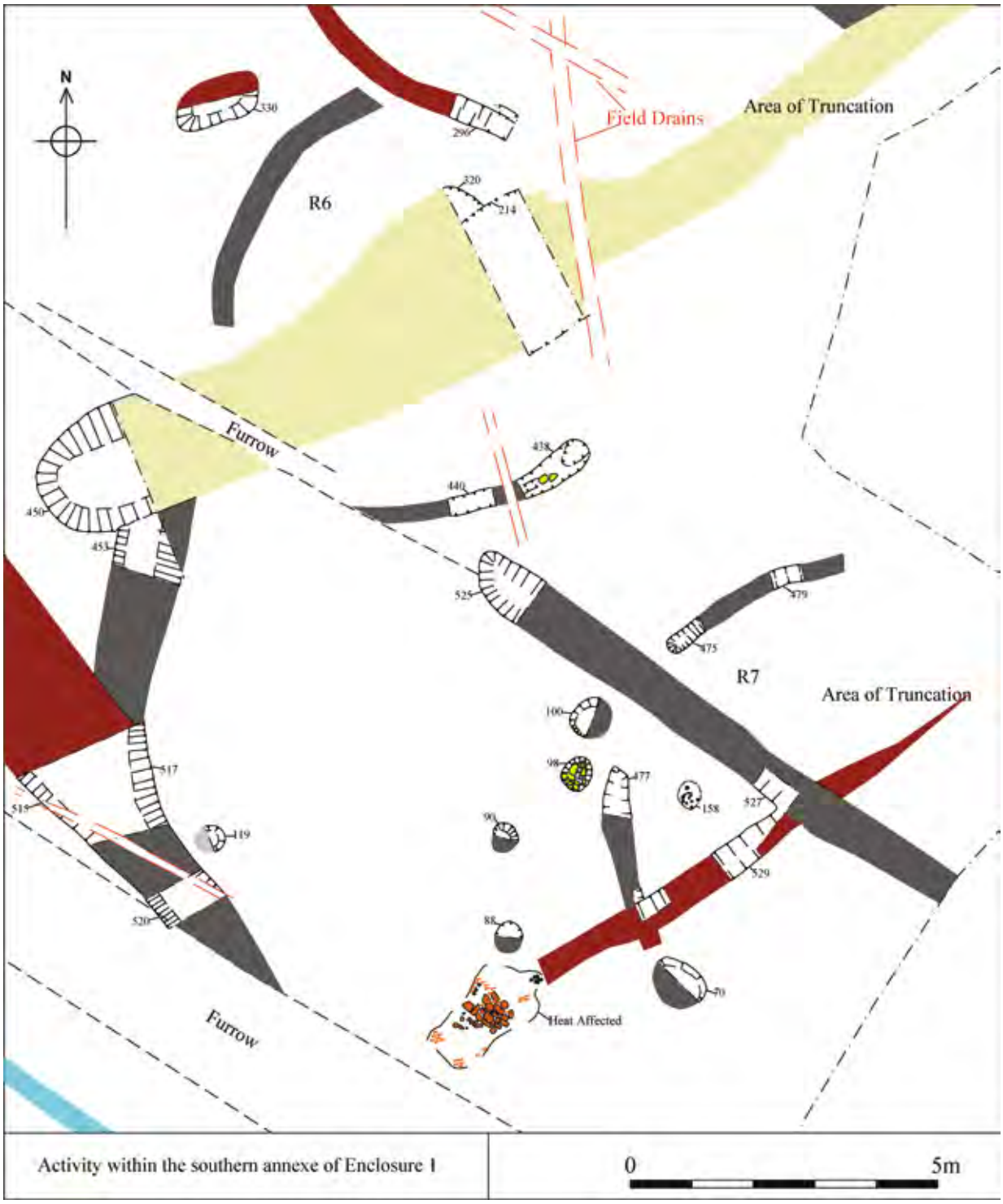


Fig 14 Activity within the southern annexe (R6; DG18 and R7; DG 20)

internal structures apart from the digging of a new subdivision (Fig 13: DG16; Fig 15, S.15) and the shortening of the existing ditch (DG10), perhaps to allow access to the newly created central space. The south part of the annexe contained two poorly preserved roundhouses R6 (DG18) and R7 (DG20) (Fig 13 and Fig 14), with a group of associated pits and postholes (SG3) perhaps within a small surrounding enclosure suggested by lengths of curving ditch (DG19, DG19a). A further ditch (DG17, Fig 15, S.17) ran parallel with DG9, extending beyond the SE extent of the excavation area, and appeared to pre-date roundhouse R7. Roundhouse R6 consisted of a discontinuous annular gully measuring *c* 7.0m in diameter and up to 0.28m deep with a SE entrance, and contained no internal features. Roundhouse R7 also consisted of a discontinuous annular gully, *c* 8.5m in diameter and up to 0.25m deep with a NW entrance (Fig 14). The gully only contained a single pit 157, which was undated.

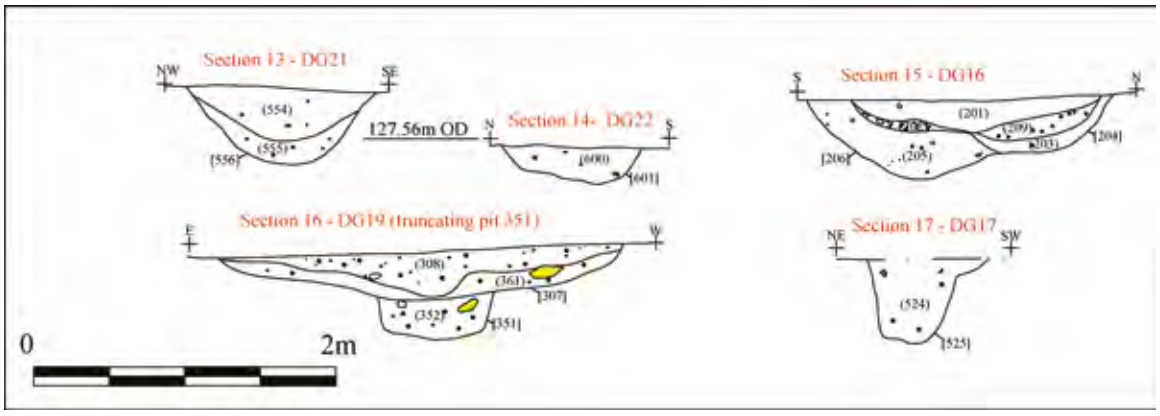


Fig 15 Sections of ditch systems of the mid-late 1st century AD

To the NE of the enclosure (in Excavation Area 6D, north of the field boundary) a new Enclosure, 3, was constructed (DG21, Fig 15, S.13), with the area between the two enclosures now bounded by a northern ditch (DG22, Fig 15, S.14) and subdivided by DG23 (Fig 13). Only the western part of Enclosure 3 was detected, measuring 35m × 25m, with geophysical survey revealing slightly more. Neither the enclosure nor the associated ditches were long-lived, having single cuts containing pottery of the mid-late 1st century AD, and they perhaps provided a temporary solution to stock management.

Phase 4: Early-middle Roman settlement enclosure (late 1st to mid-2nd centuries AD)

From timber to stone

Towards the end of the 1st century AD the settlement took the form of a single rectilinear enclosure, 86m by 66m, created through the merging of Enclosure 1 and its SW annexe into a single entity (Fig 17: DG9, DG26–28, DG30–34 and Fig 26, S.23–25). The pottery recovered from the ditches predominantly dated from the late 1st to mid-2nd century AD with little evidence of residuality from the earlier phases of activity. The eastern entrance of the enclosure was maintained (DG27 and DG28), and ditches (DG30 and DG33) had been dug to continue the line of the north ditch in a NW–SE direction, perhaps to connect to other enclosures beyond the limits of excavation. The burial, SK2, of an adult male of 36–50 years, radiocarbon dated to between 70–230 calAD (95.4% confidence, 1873±30BP, Ua-42883), was located at the junction between DG32 and DG33, within the original northern corner of the enclosure (Figs 16 & 17) (Jacklin in Harvey 2012). No separate grave cut was apparent, suggesting that the burial was contemporary with the backfilling of this phase of the enclosure, rather than a later insertion. The latest cut of the enclosure ditch (DG34) replaced the northern corner of the enclosure, straightening its form at this point.

Within the enclosure a stone-founded roundhouse (SG4) was constructed close to the footprint of Roundhouse R3, and contained a number of ovens (Figs 17–22). Associated

Fig 16 Burial SK2 within ditch group DG32

with it, in the south half of the enclosure, were two wells and a trough-like feature 299, whilst a short section of wall and an ironstone-rubble surface (SG5), lay close to the E entrance of the enclosure.

The stone roundhouse (SG4) survived as an ironstone foundation with an external diameter of 9.4m, and an internal diameter of 8.25m, giving an internal area of 52m^2 (Fig 18). Two courses of pitched ironstone rubble were preserved up to 0.37m deep; the small size of fragments (250mm) would suggest that this foundation supported an organic superstructure, perhaps with cob walling, as clay

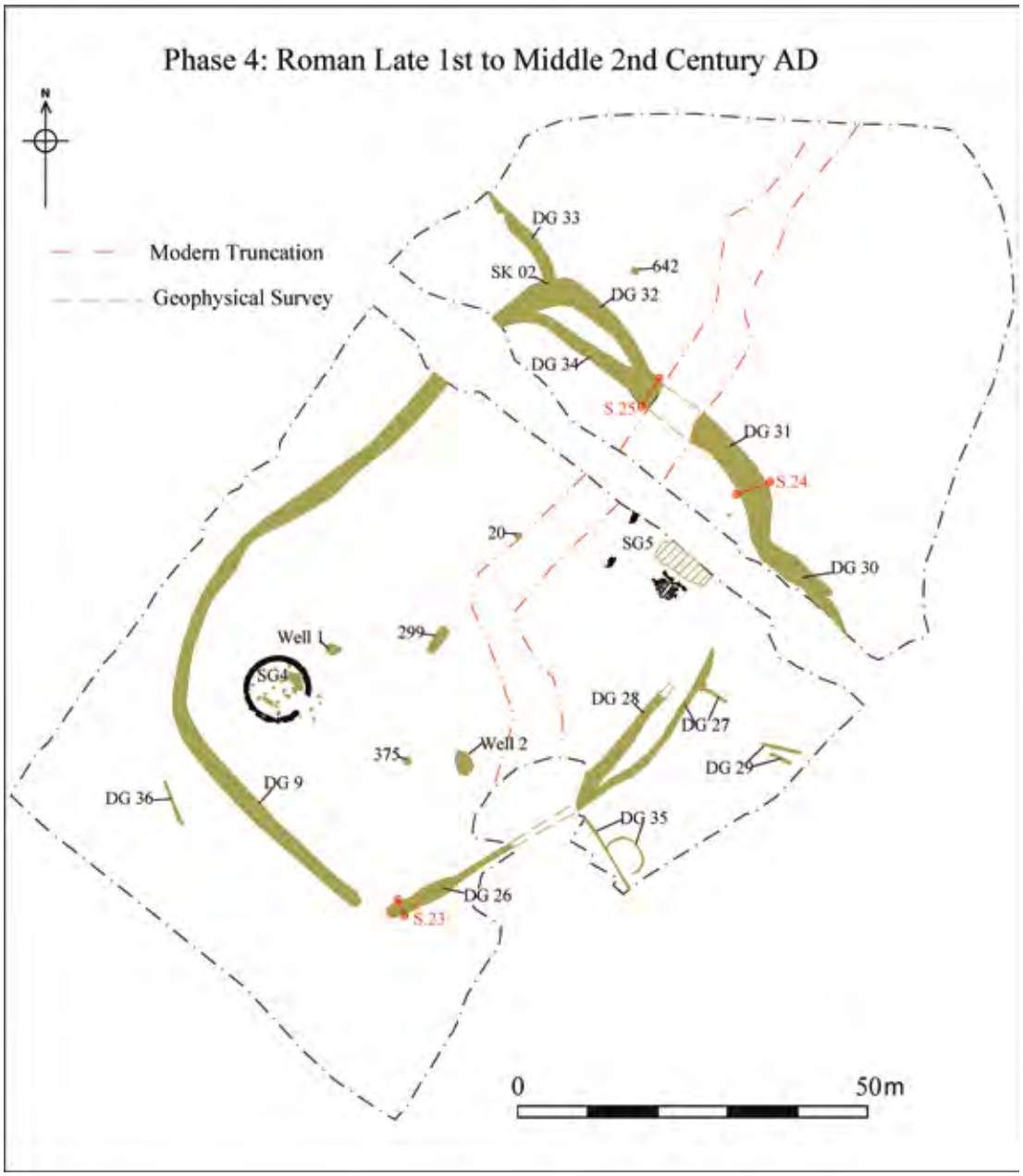


Fig 17 Phase 4: Early-middle Roman settlement enclosure (late 1st to middle 2nd centuries AD)

with chalk and flint inclusions was seen to bond the rubble together (Fig 19).

The building had an entrance in the SE, the north side of which was not preserved, and six postholes possibly suggested a porch. Internal divisions were also suggested by a line of postholes, which continued from the porch to screen off the SW part of the building, whilst a second line divided off the rear half of the interior.

The remaining eastern portion, next to the entrance, contained an oven 295, 332, 381 and 389 that was rebuilt and modified on two occasions, incorporating a stone chamber (Fig 21). The small number of pottery sherds recovered from the successive ovens suggested a date in the 2nd century. Only charcoal and three cereal grains, including spelt, were recorded in the soil samples from oven 381. Environmental remains from the later ovens were even sparser, with single cereal grains recorded from each, although charcoal was recorded throughout. The structures are certainly most reminiscent of corn-drying ovens but the lack of supporting evidence makes this interpretation uncertain.

Another oven structure 163 was located in the SW part of the building, within the area which had possibly been partitioned off. This oven was key-hole shaped and is also reminiscent of a corn-drier although the function of this structure could not be determined on the basis of the environmental samples retrieved from the feature, which only contained charcoal (Fig 22).

The two wells were broadly contemporary with the roundhouse; Well 1 lay 5m to the NE and Well 2, 25m to the SE (Fig 17). Well 1 (387) was round and nearly 2m in diameter with a depth exceeding 3.2m (Fig 23). Pottery

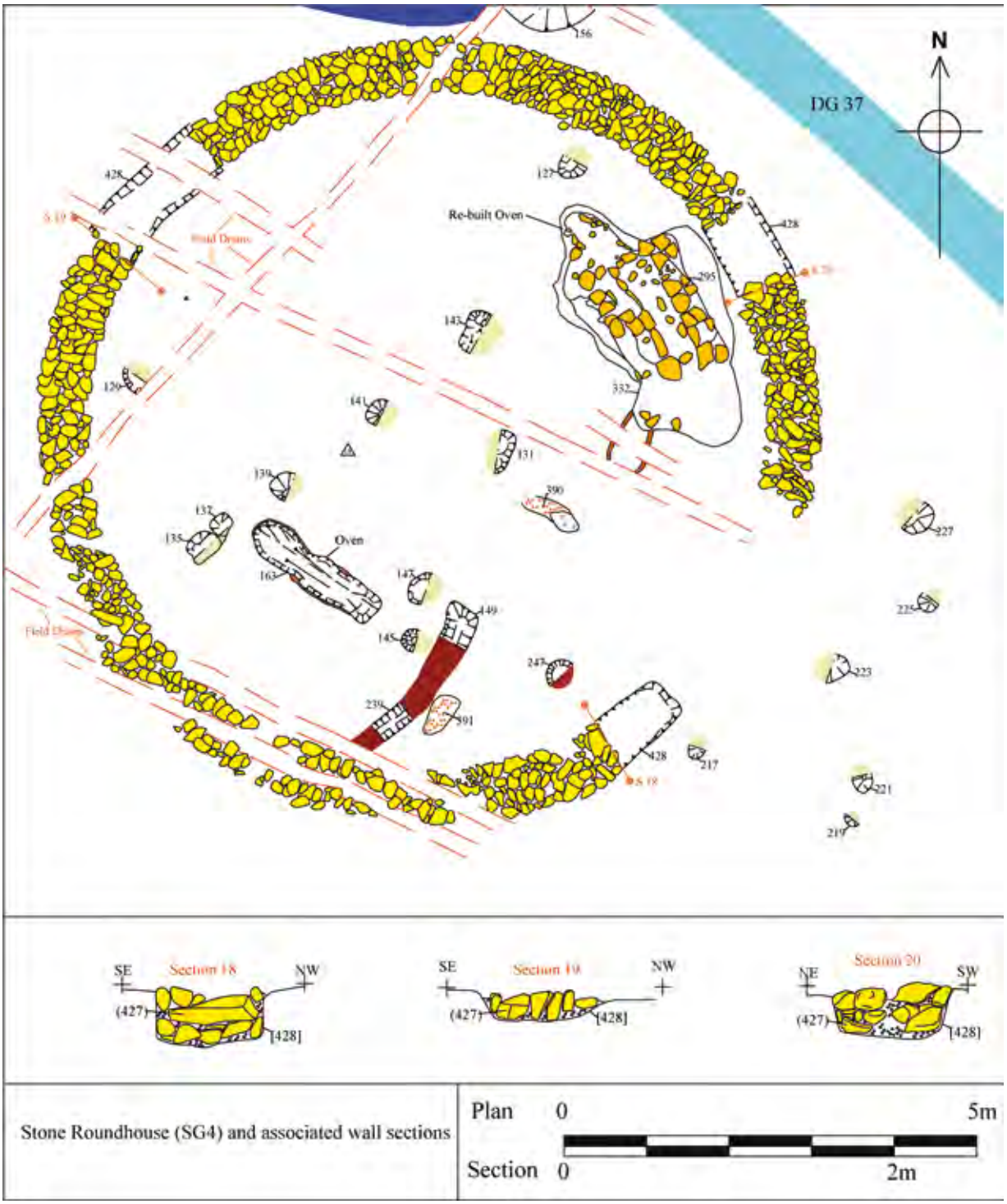


Fig 18 Stone roundhouse (SG4), including representative wall sections

from the upper fills suggested it went out of use in the later 1st or early 2nd century and was capped by a layer of ironstone rubble. Well 2 (316) was larger, oval in plan, 3.7m by 2.4m and more than 3.2m deep (Fig 24). One of the fills consisted of a dump of charred cereal grains mainly of spelt with smaller amounts of chaff, perhaps waste from processing or cleaning for food production. The dating of the pottery from the lowest excavated fills is mid-2nd century, and from the upper fills, later 2nd century, suggesting that Well 2 succeeded Well 1. Towards the centre of the site, east of Well 1, and probably contemporary, there was a large, rectangular, flat-bottomed pit 299, over 4m long, interpreted as a drinking trough, with the fill containing late 1st and 2nd-century pottery (Fig 17).

Two discontinuous lengths of ironstone wall (SG5) lay close to the eastern enclosure entrance and were only preserved to one or two courses (Fig 17 and Fig 25). A

Fig 19 Stone roundhouse wall foundation, looking SW

single sherd of 2nd-century pottery was recovered from within the wall construction. To the SE of the wall, closer to the entrance, was a spread/surface of ironstone of 4.5m × 3.0m that had been pressed into the natural clay, with a group of heat-affected stones towards the centre. Adjacent to the north was a shallow spread of dark earth, measuring 8m by 3m, which overlay the pit alignment. Both these features contained abraded groups of pottery dated mid-2nd century. Given the lack of further masonry it is not possible to ascertain the function of these structural remains but is seems more likely that the wall remains represent part of an internal boundary wall that may have sub-enclosed an external working area rather than forming part of an actual building.

Additionally, two pits 20 and 375 belonged to this phase of the enclosure, both containing pottery dated later 1st to mid-2nd century. A further contemporary pit 642 was located immediately outside the enclosure close to the NE corner.

There were further traces of activity outside the enclosure close to the SE entrance, comprising a narrow gully extending 12m perpendicular to the SE enclosure ditch with a small D-shaped pen on the N side (DG35), containing pottery date early-middle 2nd century. Other short lengths of gully (DG29, DG36) also extended SE always from the enclosure entrance. It is likely these features would have facilitated the control of animals through the enclosure.

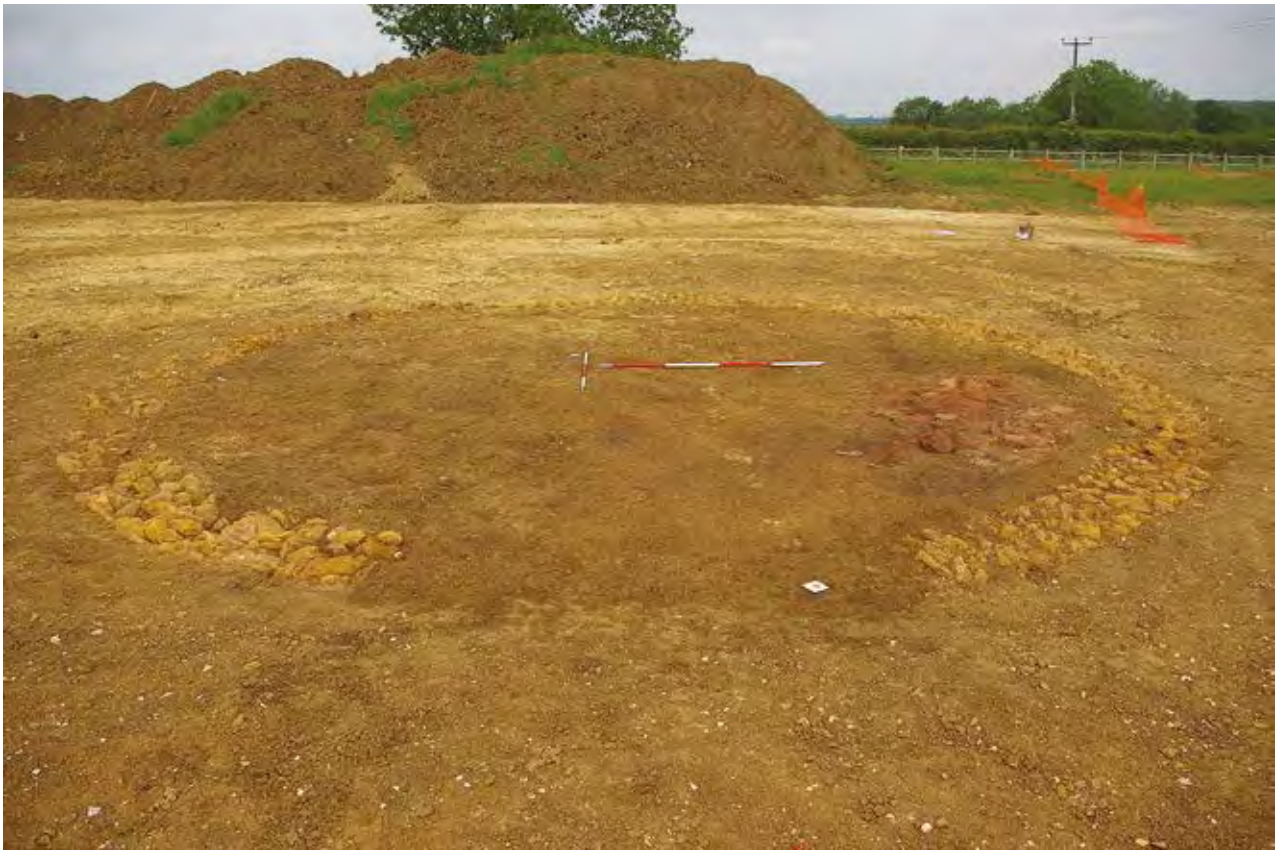


Fig 20 Stone roundhouse (SG4), looking NW

Fig 21 Latest oven structure 295, within stone roundhouse, looking north

Fig 22 Oven 163, within stone roundhouse, looking NE

Fig 23 Well 1 (387), looking NW

Fig 24 Well 2 (316), looking NW

Phase 5: Middle to late Roman settlement (2nd to 4th centuries AD)

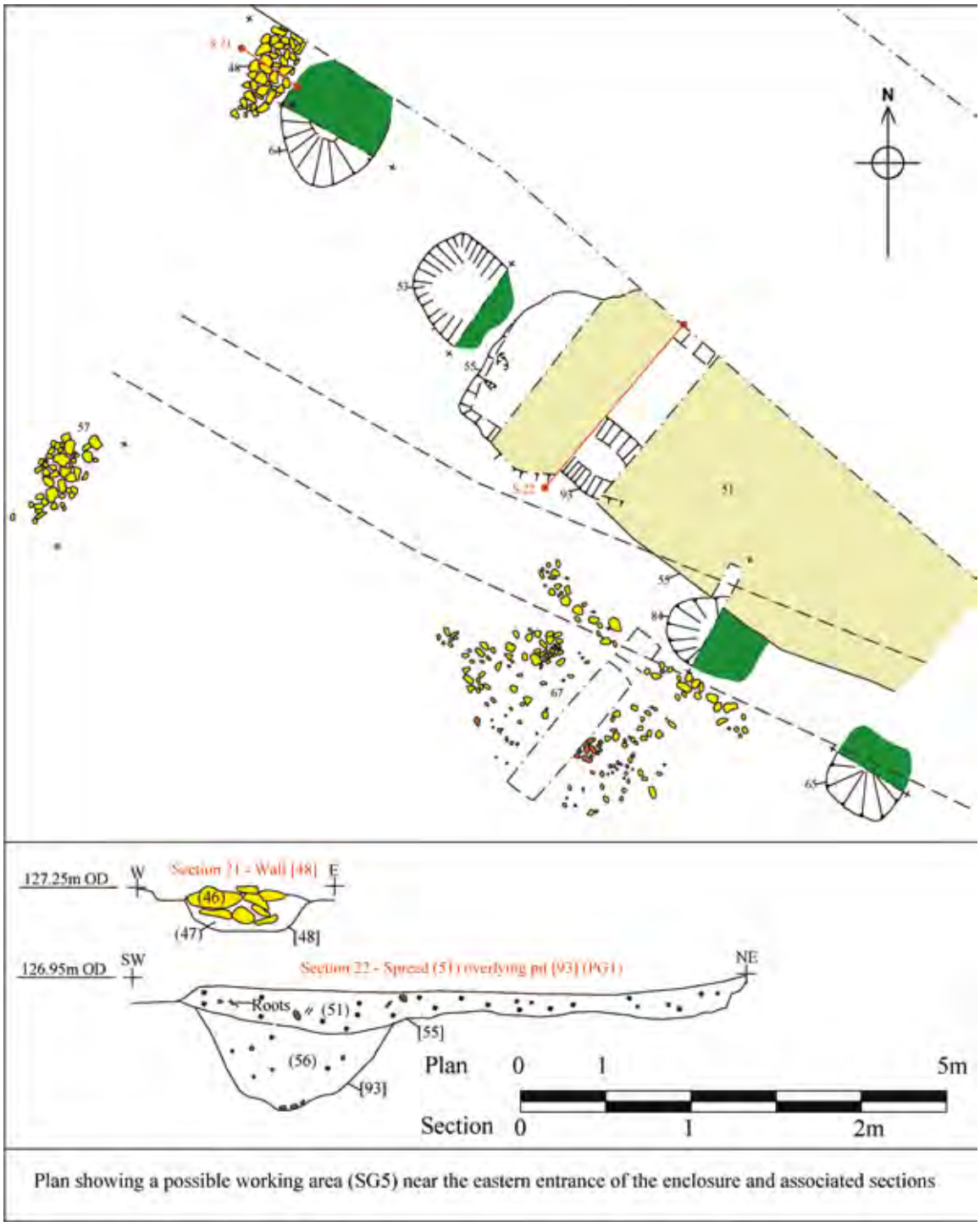
Site reorganisation

The enclosure ditches had been largely backfilled during the middle of the 2nd century, except on the S side (DG9 and DG26) close to the stone-founded roundhouse (SG4) where it remained partially open to a depth of 0.4m (Fig 28). The stone roundhouse was now bounded on the N side by a trackway defined by parallel ditches, set 3.2m apart (DG37–DG39, Fig 31, S.26–28), to create a D-shaped enclosure with the remaining elements of the earlier enclosure ditch, measuring 52m × 20m.

A substantial ironstone causeway (SG6, Fig 27) had been constructed across the W enclosure ditch to facilitate the continuation of the trackway which, following the line for the flanking ditch DG39, appears to swing N beyond the excavation area. The actual dating of the trackway is uncertain, fills of the ditches produced early-mid 2nd century pottery but two later Roman coins dated to AD306–313 and AD341–346 were also recovered, suggesting it could have been in use into the 4th century. It is also uncertain when the stone-founded roundhouse fell into disuse; an early 4th-century coin was recovered from the rubble, but given the lack of pottery dating after the later 2nd/early 3rd centuries, it is likely to be intrusive. However, is it possible that the ruins of the building may have remained partially upstanding for a prolonged period after the occupation had ceased.

Outside the enclosure, two parallel ditches (DG40 and DG41) skirted the SW perimeter, the outer one (Fig 28, DG40; Fig 31, S.30) continuing north for at least another 20m, according to the geophysical survey, to run in parallel with DG39, forming the continuation of the trackway to the north of the excavated area (Fig 28). The fill of DG40 contained a small amount of residual pottery of the late 1st to 2nd centuries, and two later Roman coins dating to AD275–6 and AD364–78 were recovered from the upper fill of the ditch. DG41 was the only feature on the site that contained predominantly later Roman pottery, as well as a late Roman bone hairpin.

Two ovens, 244 and 94, were constructed partly across the line of the enclosure ditch DG9. Oven 244 was similar to the latest oven 295 within the stone-founded roundhouse but less well-preserved, and may have used the remaining



Plan showing a possible working area (SG5) near the eastern entrance of the enclosure and associated sections

Fig 25 Plan of possible working area (SG5)

shallow enclosure ditch as a stoke pit, indicated by a charcoal spread (Fig 29). Oven 94 was keyhole-shaped in plan with a charcoal-rich fill but was also poorly-preserved. A shallow pit fill or spread of charcoal and burnt clay lay adjacent but sampling for plant remains yielded only a few grains of wheat and barley and a few fragments of chaff and therefore no clear indication that the ovens were used specifically for crop processing.

In an area to the NE of the trackway, overlying the previous enclosure ditch, pairs of small parallel gullies (Fig 28, DG44 & Fig 31, S.31–32) were recorded on the same alignment as the trackway. To the east (within 6D), further parallel shallow ditches were recorded that were on a perpendicular alignment (Fig 28, DG42 and DG43, Fig 31, S.29). These may represent later Roman agricultural features but only a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered (Fig 28).

To the east of DG42, a small oven, 560, was constructed with an associated clay quarry pit 551 similar to pit 357 located adjacent to DG39, close to the stone causeway.

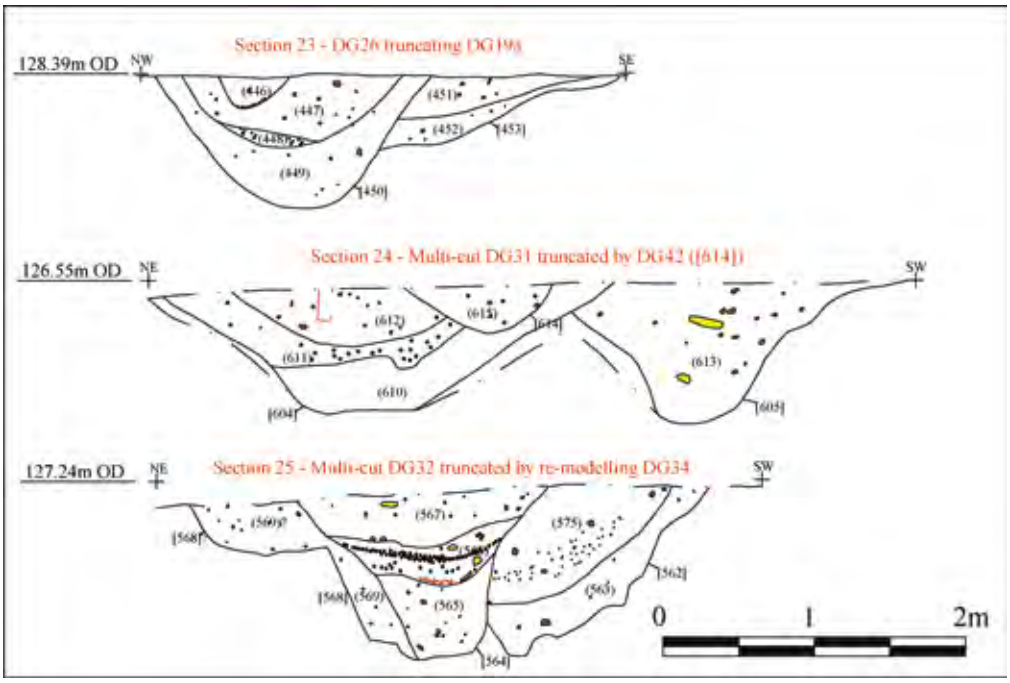


Fig 26 Phase 4: Sections of Enclosure ditch (DG26, DG31 and DG32)

Fig 27 Stone causeway (SG6)

Special Deposit associated with the final 'levelling' of the Enclosure Ditch DG9

The shallow remnants of enclosure ditch DG9 was levelled with distinctly different material to the earlier silting, and contained a mixed assemblage of late 1st to late 2nd-century pottery. The levelling deposit in one specific 7m long section of the ditch (DG9, ditch cut 50, upper fill 25) contained a remarkable group of artefacts that are discussed in detail below. The metal finds were recovered in three groups, each about 1m across (Fig 30). Proceeding SE, the first group comprised a silver wheel clasp and chain from a necklace (Fig 34), two small copper alloy busts (Fig 36) and a spearhead; the second, a spearhead, harpoon (Fig 37), and an iron nail cleaner, and the third an enamelled plate brooch in the shape of a fish (Fig 35), an iron sheet fragment and another iron spearhead. The deposit also contained two small groups of oyster shells (not seen elsewhere on the site). Three later 2nd-century coins, including a silver denarius of Faustina (wife of Marcus Aurelius) dating to AD175–6, also came from the levelling of DG9, suggesting that the activity took place in the last quarter of the century. Three undated pits 122, 162 and 179 containing articulated bone groups (ABGs) from the burial of two complete sheep/goats and a pig were located just outside the perimeter of DG9, with pit 162 appearing to cut the edge of the ditch. These have been tentatively attributed to Phase 5 and, together with some of the bone from the upper fill itself, may also relate to this special deposit and are discussed in more detail below.

Phase 6: Early Anglo-Saxon burial

Whilst the site produced no evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement, the disturbed remains of a prone burial of an adult male aged between 36 and 42.5 years (see Jacklin in Harvey 2012) were recorded within the top of the Phase 2–3 enclosure ditch DG7, accompanied by three knife blades (Figs 32 & 33). No clear grave cut was recorded as the remains were found at the top of a previously machined (possibly truncated) level. A bone from the burial was radiocarbon dated to between 570–660 calAD (95.4% confidence, 1431±30BP, Ua-42882), indicating the grave was substantially later than the ditch that it had been cut into. However, the alignment of the burial does appear to respect the later alignment of the Phase 5 trackway (DG37 – DG39).

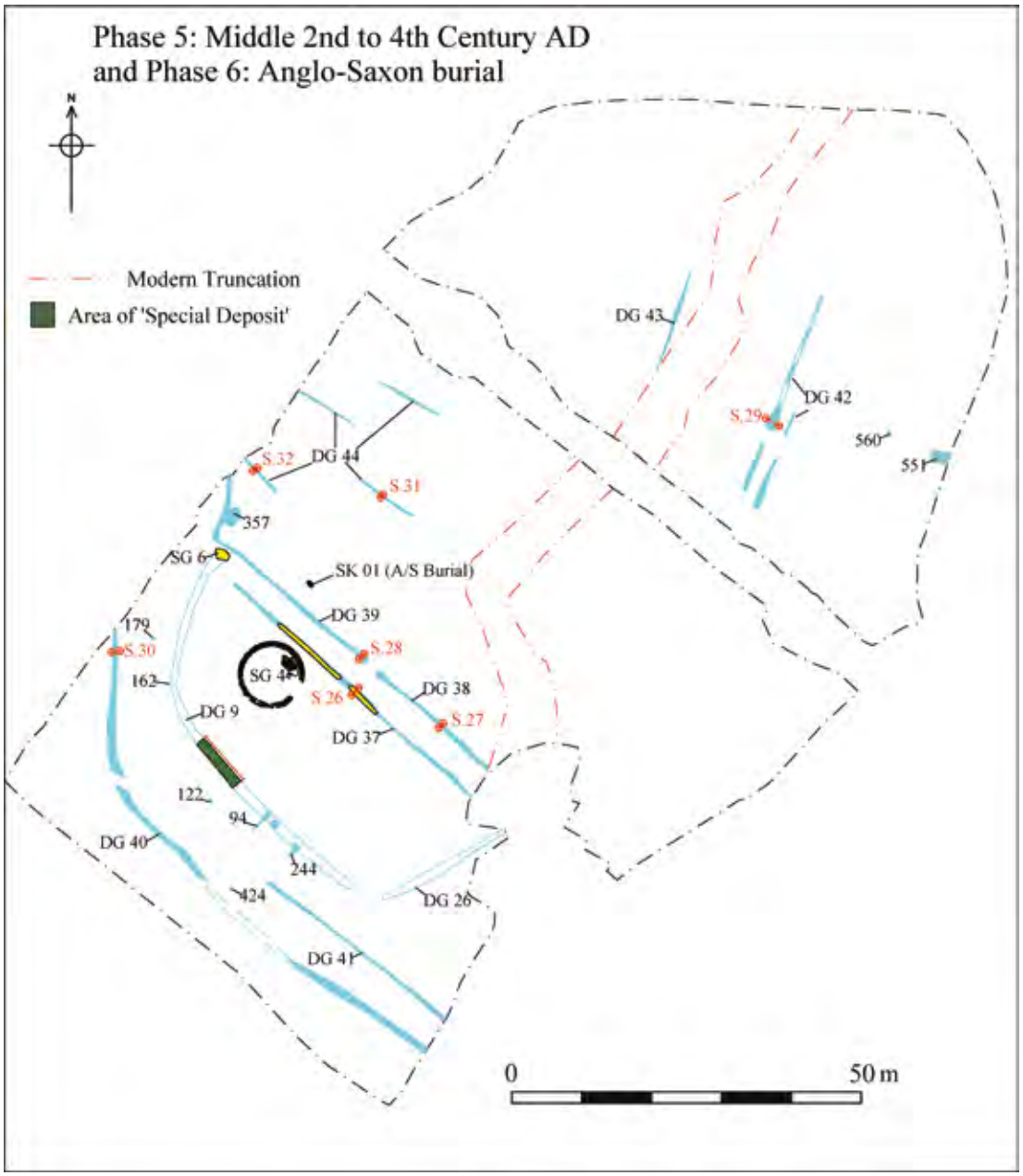


Fig 28: Phase 5: Middle to late Roman settlement (mid 2nd to 4th centuries AD) and Phase 6: Anglo-Saxon burial

Fig 29 Oven 244, partially infilling the latest phase of DG9

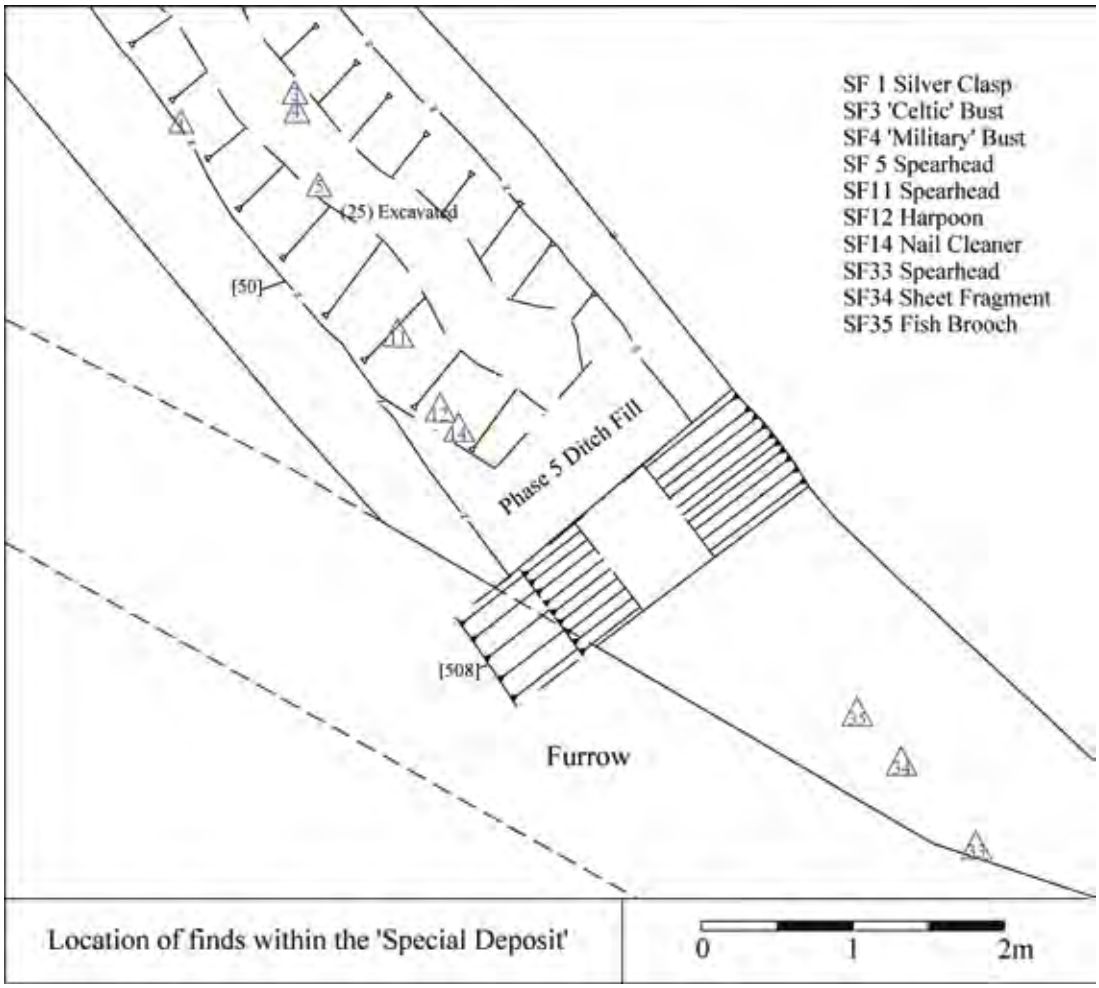


Fig 30 Plan showing location of metal finds within the 'special deposit'

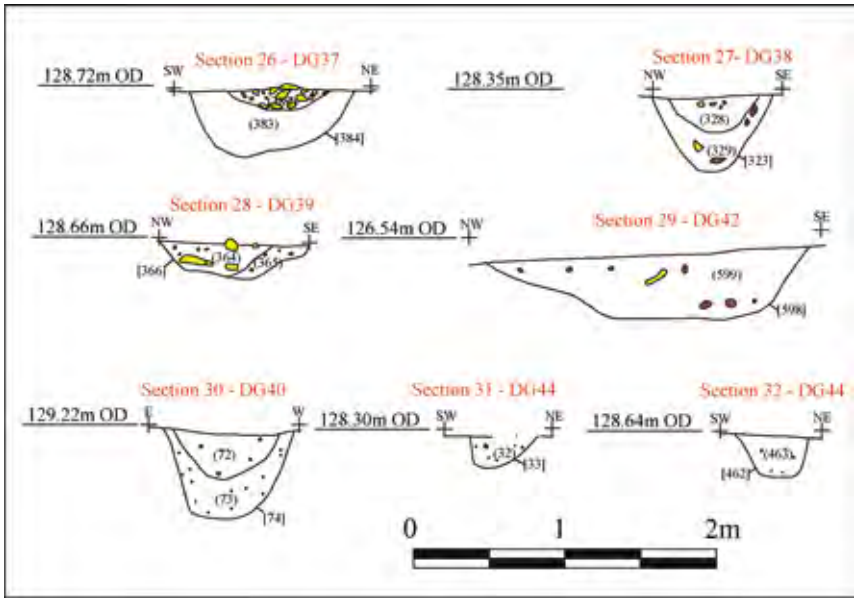


Fig 31 Phase 5: Sections of ditch systems (DG37, DG38, DG39, DG40, DG42 and DG44)

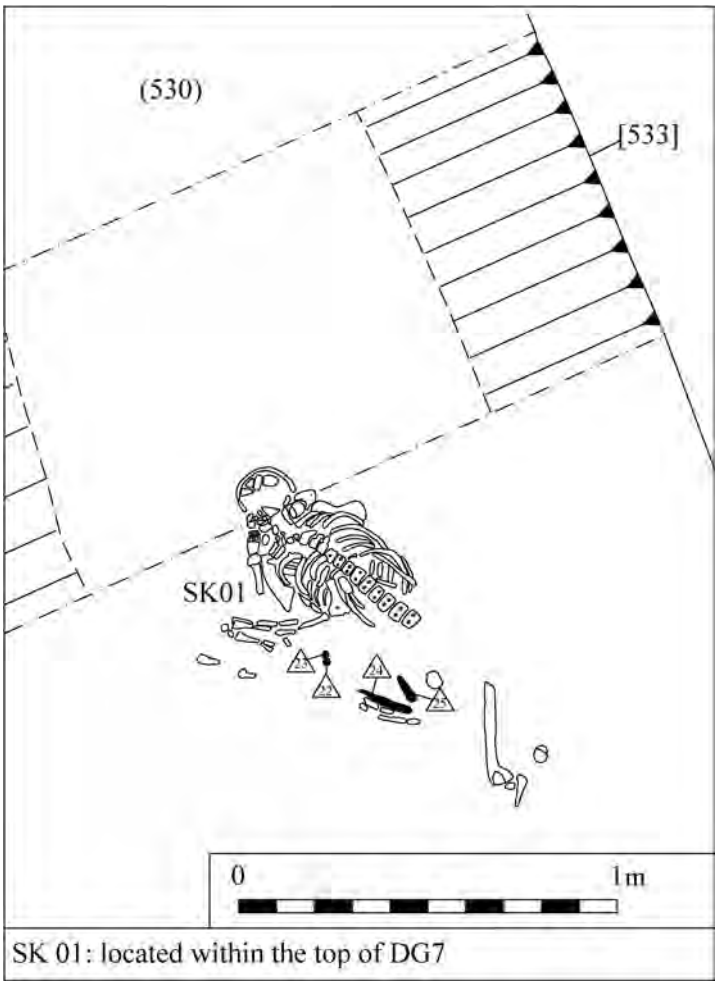


Fig 32 Plan of burial SK01 with associated grave goods

Fig 33 Burial, SK01, within the top of ditch DG7

Economy

by Jennifer Browning, Elizabeth Johnson, Angela Monckton and Anita Radini

The animal bone assemblage from the site was unfortunately affected by poor preservation, dictating that those of larger animals will be over-represented in comparison to smaller animals and juveniles (Browning in Harvey 2012). Whilst a degree of caution is therefore advisable, the evidence indicates that cattle and sheep husbandry formed the basis of the economy in all phases. Cattle dominated during the Iron Age and early post-Conquest period (Phases 1–3), and this is in agreement with findings from Mawsley 3B (Hull and Preston 2002, 18). However, in contrast to many Roman sites that tend to show a shift towards cattle husbandry, Phases 4 and 5 see an increase in sheep relative to cattle. This trend has also been seen at other sites in the region during the Roman period, for example at Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes (Dobney and Jacques 1996, 227). While, in some cases, this may suggest continuation of pre-Conquest husbandry, other explanations are possible. Evidence suggests that sheep, rather than cattle, were the most common source of dairy products in the Roman period (Cool 2006 94), and, for example, the high proportion of young sheep at Higham Ferrers, slaughtered whilst the mothers were still lactating, has been interpreted as evidence of dairying (Strid 2009, 299).

At Mawsley, a tentative link can also be made between the high proportions of sheep bones and dairy production through the occurrence of two ceramic strainers perhaps used to separate curds and whey during cheese making (Cool 2006, 85–97). Such vessels are relatively unusual occurrences; the first made by cutting holes through the base of a large shell-tempered ware storage jar (dating to the mid-late 1st century but recovered from a Phase 4 feature), and the second, a grey ware bowl with perforations deliberately cut through the base before firing (recovered from a Phase 3 ditch). Although the evidence is not overwhelming, the Phase 4 bone assemblage suggests that dairy production and/or a preference for young lamb may have been important at Mawsley, where there is a fairly high representation of juvenile sheep (38% based on mandibles). The representation of both cattle and sheep carcasses was similar during Phases 2 and 3; the presence of elements from all parts of the body suggesting that the animals were slaughtered and distributed on the site. However, during Phase 4 forelimbs were more abundant, which may suggest an emphasis on the meatier parts of the carcass. In all phases, except Phase 5, pig bones were poorly represented, mainly consisting of fragments from the skull and jaws.

The evidence for plants indicates only limited consumption of grain during the Iron Age and early post-Conquest period (Phases 1–3), and this occurrence of small-scale cereal cleaning is found on many sites of this date. The low density of cereal remains (0.1 to 0.3 items per litre of soil) taken with other evidence from the site may indicate that the inhabitants of the farmstead were more concerned with animal husbandry. The site is located on heavy clay that may therefore have been less conducive to arable farming and more suitable as pasture. During the Roman period evidence for crop production and processing on the site was also very limited, although poor preservation of the remains might be a factor. The cereals present during Phases 4 and 5 comprised spelt with a little barley, but in very small quantities. This included a deposit containing some burnt grain, chaff and a few weed seeds, recovered at a density of 5.4 items/litre from Well 2 of Phase 4, dating to the mid-2nd century AD. This period also saw the construction of a number of ovens within the stone-founded roundhouse and elsewhere around the outside of the enclosure, but whilst such ovens are often assumed to have been associated with cereal processing, the samples from them only yielded charred grain and spelt chaff fragments in extremely small quantities. Ovens positively identified as corn driers, or used to dehusk spelt or parch malted grain, are, in contrast, usually associated with dumps of cereal waste at densities of hundreds of items per litre of soil, and so it can be assumed that cereals were only being processed on site at a small scale, perhaps being brought in from elsewhere, and that the ovens had a different primary function.

Material Culture

by Nicholas J Cooper and Elizabeth Johnson

The wealth and access to 'exotic' metal objects indicated by the Phase 5 special deposit, discussed in detail below, stands in sharp contrast to other finds from the site. The occurrence of non-ceramic finds was very low across the remainder of the site, an iron brooch being the only metal object of Late Iron Age date from Enclosure 1. The Roman assemblage comprised just two bone hair pins, a ceramic counter, a vessel glass fragment, two iron knives and 17 nails; rather paltry compared to the assemblages from similarly-sized Roman rural sites such as Glapthorn Road, Oundle (Hylton *et al* 2004, 24), Thorplands (Hunter & Mynard 1977) and Hardwick Park (Foster *et al* 1977) for example, but probably a reflection of the early span of the Roman occupation, before dress accessories other than brooches become common in rural areas, as well as the low status of the site. The pattern of coin loss, just ten occurrences, reflects this too; the later 2nd-century issues perhaps associated with the ritual activity, and the late issues being casual losses relating to occupation nearby.

The pottery assemblage also indicates a site of low status and typical of many other rural sites in the county during the Iron Age and early Roman period. The Iron Age assemblage is dominated by jars in East Midlands scored ware (Elsdon 1992) and like the Mawsley 3B assemblage contained no examples of La Tene decorated pottery (Hull & Preston 2002, 10). The Belgic-style pottery assemblage is comparable with sites at Weekley (Jackson & Dix 1987), Wakerley (Jackson & Ambrose 1978) and Grange Park, Courteenhall (Hancocks *et al* 2006); the assemblage from the latter containing a low proportion of small carinated cups and bowls compared to larger jars (2006, 240). This pattern is similar to that at Mawsley where, although dishes, bowls and drinking vessels do make an appearance in small quantities, jars still dominate the group (93%).

The Roman assemblage is also conservative with few imports or regional wares and only small quantities of fine

and specialist wares. The local coarse wares are dominant and fine wares account for only 5.8% (estimated vessel equivalent). In considering the sources of Roman pottery to the site, imported wares form 3.5% and regional wares only 0.2%. The overwhelmingly local nature of the pottery, with small quantities of imported and regional wares is typical of a relatively low status early Roman rural site during the 1st and 2nd centuries before the large rural-nucleated industries start to become dominant (Cooper 2000, 77–82). The latest phase of Roman activity does, however, show a marked increase in the number of colour-coated ware beakers from the Lower Nene Valley which is a typical pattern seen on Romano-British rural sites (Evans 2001, 30–31).

The special deposit

by Nicholas J Cooper, Jennifer Browning and Angela Monckton

As summarised above, the metal finds comprising the Phase 5 special deposit were arranged in three groups within the upper fill of the enclosure ditch (Fig 30). The first comprised a silver wheel clasp and chain, two copper alloy busts and a spearhead; the second, a nail cleaner, spearhead and harpoon, and the third an enamelled plate brooch in the shape of a fish, a sheet fragment and another spearhead. The following section firstly discusses the significance of the group and then its associated material and context.

The finds and their significance

by Nicholas J Cooper

The silver wheel necklace clasp (Fig 34) has a long pedigree and could have been made practically anywhere in the Empire; the iconography of the wheel, an ancient solar symbol, being universal, and chiming with the use of the wheel in Celtic religious iconography as an attribute of the god Taranis (Johns 1996, 92). Such representations are usually linked to the moon and complete necklaces of this type, such as those from the Backworth hoard from Tyne and Wear, also incorporate a crescent-shaped pendant (1996, 93, fig 5.5). The present clasp is similar in many respects to all the examples from the Backworth and Snettisham Roman jeweller's hoard in the British Museum and the gold example from Dolaucothi (Green 1978, 59, plate 45a), but most significantly, it is almost identical, both in size and decorative detail, to one of the silver examples from Snettisham (Johns 1996, 93, fig 5.6 centre), and it is therefore conceivable that they were made by the same silversmith. The significance of the occurrence of this object at this site cannot be underestimated; such items simply do not occur in domestic Roman finds assemblages and are not made in copper alloy, which would suggest that they were confined to priestly regalia as suggested by Miranda Green (1978, 19).

The fish plate brooch is also relatively unusual find (Fig 35); only three enamelled examples comparable to this are published in the major corpus volumes (Mackreth 2011, 130, plate 127.11693; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 48–49 colour plate 8 from London with a silver beaded margins; Hattatt 2000, fig 221.1198 from Lincolnshire). The *floruit* of enamelling is during the mid-late 2nd century and so the brooch date is contemporary with the other finds and pottery from this context. Brooches are commonly found as votive offerings, for example from recognised shrines and temples such as nearby Higham Ferrers (Scott 2009, 223) and Harlow, Essex (Gobel 1985, 70) probably because, like low denomination coins, they represented affordable 'losses' to ordinary people making offerings. The parallel example of horse and rider plate brooches found in profusion at Bosworth Roman temple in Leicestershire demonstrates this point admirably as the apparent mass-production of poorly-made enamelled plates, perhaps on site for sale to devotees, dispensed with the need for a catch plate or spring, as there was no intention to wear them before deposition (Scott 2009, 268).

Two, miniature, human busts, cast in a copper/lead alloy, were once attached to the sides of a silver plated bowl, judging by the traces on their curved bases. The

Fig 34 Silver wheel necklace clasp (Scale interval 10mm)

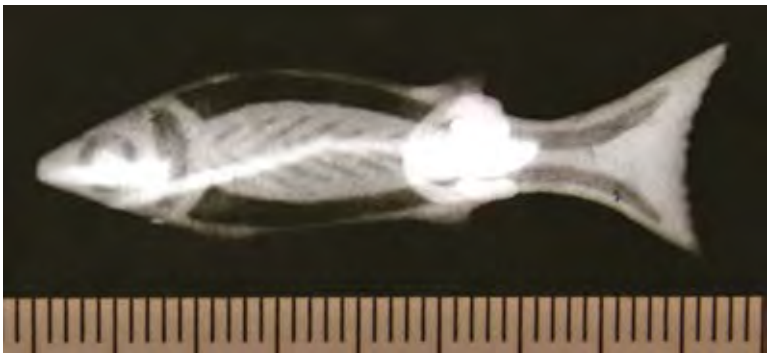


Fig 35 X-ray of fish plate brooch (Scale interval 1mm)

busts portray a native Briton (Fig 36, right) and a Roman helmeted figure respectively (Fig 36, left). Only two examples of 'native' busts suitable for attachment to a vessel are known, and both are metal-detected finds from Sussex (Isted 1988, 53) and Denbighshire recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (www.finds.org.uk, find ref CPAT-3E1007). The helmeted figure is paralleled closely by a bust of Minerva from Stonea, Cambridgeshire, identical in size, at 29mm high, to the present example, bearing a crested helmet and a recessed back suitable for attachment to a vessel (Jackson and Potter 1996, 350, fig 112.96). Their rarity may be due to the fact they were specifically cast for a small number of highly-prized souvenir bowls, representing either the stylised personifications of 'Roman and native' (conqueror and conquered), or Roman (Mars or Minerva) and native deities respectively.

The three socketed spearheads vary in size but are all leaf-shaped and broadly comparable to Roman military examples of 2nd-century date. The two-pronged harpoon (Fig 37) is not a weapon of the Roman military, and its rather stylised shape, suggests it may have been a cult

Fig 36 The miniature busts (helmeted figure 29mm high)

Fig 37 The two-pronged harpoon

object similar to the ritual or cult spearhead, found alongside a small whittle-tanged spearhead and a barbed knife blade from the shrine at Higham Ferrers (Scott 2009, 220, fig 5.27 nos.80–82). A barbed fish spear also occurred amongst the votive deposits at Harlow (Gobel 1985, 95–98 and fig 48.1) and another came from Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes (Hylton 1996, 120–21, fig 68.66).

Collectively, the finds form a group that simply would not occur in a domestic setting; they have been brought together for a specific ritual purpose. The dominant theme is martial with the presence of a spearhead in each cluster and the representation of a military figure or, indeed, Mars himself (or perhaps Minerva), whilst the wheel symbol in the clasp, suggests links to the Roman god Jupiter and the Celtic god Taranis (which are often conflated) and hints at the overarching cults of sun and sky central to both Iron Age and Roman religion (Green 1986, 45). Three examples serve to reinforce these links. The first is the association of a 'ritual' spearhead or stave with a wheel model, the miniature head of Jupiter and a model mask of an oriental sun-god, forming part of a religious hoard found in a pot of mid-3rd century AD date at Felmingham Hall in Norfolk (Green 1983, 50, figs 15–16; Green 1986, 47, fig 17). The second sees wheel symbols and human heads represented together on the clay antefixes attached to the gable ends of roofs at the legionary fortress at Caerleon (Green 1986, 52, and pl.20). The third, and most closely comparable to this example, is the association of a leaf-shaped spearhead with a wooden 'Taranis' wheel in a waterlogged pit at Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes, the site which also yielded the barbed spear mentioned above (Hylton 1996, 120–21, fig 68, 65–66; Green 1996, 155–58, fig 91 and plate 22).

The context and associated material
by James Harvey, Jennifer Browning and Angela Monckton

The deposition of a series of articulated bone groups, and two small groups of oyster shells is believed to also be related to the same ritual activities that generated the special deposit of metal objects.

A number of Associated/Articulated Bone Groups (ABGs) were identified in the bone assemblage, particularly in Phase 5, within three pits close to the ditch section containing the metal finds and also within the SW side of the enclosure ditch itself. While it is not uncommon to occasionally find articulated bones, the multiple occurrences within this relatively small assemblage was significant. From a taphonomic point of view they indicate that the remains have not been affected significantly by re-working or disturbance. A summary of the ABGs is presented in Table 2; sheep are the dominant species represented among the ABGs but there is also a partial pig skeleton. In several cases the partial skeletons were recovered, although the bones were poorly preserved, a factor which was probably exacerbated by their position close to the surface of the features.

The term ABG was originally used by Hill (Hill 1995, 27) and adopted by other archaeologists as a neutral term to describe such groups of material, which may occur as a result of a number of different activities (Morris 2010, 259). Although Iron Age examples have been given the most attention, ABGs are more likely to occur on Roman sites and, after dog, sheep are most common (Morris 2010, 262).

The wider interpretation of these deposits has centred on whether they are the result of 'ritual' or 'functional' behaviour, although it is accepted that in many past societies this may be an artificial divide (Morris 2010, 266). Certainly at Mawsley more than one explanation is possible, for example the partial skeletons recovered from pits 162 and 179, which have no butchery, could indicate non-functional activities or possibly natural mortalities. Many of the deposits appear to have been placed into the top of features that were already partly backfilled and could potentially signify closure. While a comprehensive interpretation cannot be reached from the bones alone, the unusual aspects of the faunal remains are given greater weight when considered alongside the atypical artefactual evidence.

Two groups of oyster shells were also recovered within the same section of ditch that contained the metal finds and ABGs. These were not recorded elsewhere on the site. There were similar numbers of right and left valves,

Table 2: The occurrence of articulated bone groups within Phases 4–5

Feature	Context	Cut	Taxa	Anatomical Part	Minimum Number of Individuals	Age	Butchery
ditch	511	508	sheep	mandibles and a range of other elements	3	juvenile and adult	yes
ditch	487	485	sheep	paired tibiae and partial skeleton	2	juvenile and adult	yes
ditch	25	50	sheep	an abundance of mandibles with post-cranial bones	6	juvenile and adult	yes
pit	161	162	sheep	hind-limbs and some cervical vertebrae	1	adult	no
pit	178	179	sheep	partial skeleton; 3rd molar indicates older animal.	1	adult	no
pit	123	122	pig	partial skeleton	1	neonatal / juvenile	no
pit	123	122	sheep	limb-bones and skull	1	adult	no

suggesting consumption of single meals, rather than the accumulation of domestic waste. The occurrence of oysters is unusual on Roman rural sites unless there is a specific shrine or temple associated with it as in the case of nearby Stanwick villa where a Bronze Age barrow site continued to be venerated during the Roman period (Neal 1989, 157).

Together, the evidence for artefacts and food remains at the end of the sequence of occupation of the Mawsley enclosure appears to represent an act of closure or commemoration of the settlement as it went out of use in the later 2nd century AD. The three groups of metal finds may represent separate episodes of deposition within the ditch and some significance might be placed on the presence of a single spearhead in each group. Alternatively, the artefacts could represent deposits originally made within, or on top of the enclosure bank, which later become displaced and re-deposited in the ditch when the area was levelled off. In this scenario it is possible that the items of weaponry may have still been hafted and been placed upright in the ground to be visible, as has been proposed for some enclosure entrances (Hingley 2006, 226).

Looking more widely, evidence for special deposits of both artefacts and animal remains on rural Roman settlement sites has often been overlooked despite their recognition on Iron Age sites (Taylor 2006, 159; Bradley 2005, 20–35) and Hingley (2006) has attempted to redress the imbalance and study the context of deposition for iron objects during the Iron Age and Roman periods. He observed that enclosures were the preferred depositional location for iron artefacts between the 1st century BC and 1st century AD, but that between the 2nd and 5th centuries, wells became the prime location. Hingley argues that a significant proportion of these deposits were acts of closure or commemoration of an old settlement feature, before moving on, and are therefore a clear continuation of traditions established during the prehistoric period. The evidence from Mawsley would therefore suggest that commemoration of enclosures extended to the end of the 2nd century AD.

Discussion

The Iron Age landscape and settlement

The recognition and excavation of the pit alignment adds to the total of 144 identified in Northamptonshire during the National Mapping Programme (Deegan 2007) and helps build an understanding of their function as landscape boundaries. They are generally accepted as representing some of the earliest landscape boundaries and are broadly dated to the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age, although it has been suggested that those with oval pit-forms could date even earlier. It is evident from a comparison with other examples that their positioning often relates to geological or topographical changes in the landscape and a relationship with natural features such as rivers, streams and associated boggy areas is common (Rylatt and Bevan 2007; Thomas 2008; 2011). If the course of this 40m length is conjectured to continue 200m to the NW and 800m to the SE, it would have formed a land division at right angles across the watershed between the two nearby streams, practically at their source, therefore isolating the higher ground to the SW, which forms part of the watershed between the NE flowing drainage of the River Ise and the SW flowing drainage that now feeds Pitsford Water reservoir. The boundary may therefore have demarcated upland and lowland grazing and is similar to a number of pit alignments which appear to hit watercourses at right angles such as that at South Meadow Road, Upton (Speed 2013, fig 33 and this volume), isolating the upper part of a tributary of the Nene.

The precise development of the landscape during the Iron Age is uncertain although the pit alignment may have acted as a focus for the establishment of later settlement. It is suggested that Roundhouse R1 may represent the earliest phase settlement on the site, in the form of small scale open settlement. The roundhouse had been located on a pronounced ridge in the NE part of the site. This type of location is common for Iron Age sites in Northamptonshire such as the Iron Age settlements excavated at Grange Park, Courteenhall (Woodward 2006, 220) and Great Doddington (Thomas and Enright 2003, 61) and it is suggested that such positions permitted the exploitation of a range of soil types and resources as well as commanding extensive views in at least one direction (Dix and Jackson 1989, 158).

It appears that the open settlement was succeeded by an enclosed farmstead, perhaps during the 1st century BC, and the area enclosed was probably about 0.20ha, similar to that at Wootton Hill (Jackson 1990, 6), though with a much less substantial circuit. Work by Speed suggests that this would place Mawsley towards the lower end of the size range and typical of enclosures found high on valley sides rather than in valley bottoms (Speed 2013, fig 34 and 35). Though not as small as the South Meadow enclosure at 0.15ha, its location and association with an earlier pit alignment, suggests that it may have had a stock enclosure function at the boundary between upland and lowland grazing.

The common alignment of the ditches of the paired Enclosures 1 and 2 to that of the pit alignment seems unequivocal. The occurrence of enclosures along earlier boundaries is of course widespread across the county, and in the case of pit alignments it is worth noting Deegan's observation that they are often recut into continuous ditches when this occurs (Deegan 2007, 121), though not in this case or that of South Meadow. At Wakerley, Enclosures A and B were constructed parallel with, and partially overlying, an earlier posthole alignment and interrupted ditch (Jackson and Ambrose 1978, 118), whilst Enclosures A and B at Weekley had been constructed along a lengthy boundary ditch (Jackson and Dix 1988, 42). More recently, at Upton a number of enclosures had been laid out along a linear boundary ditch that ran parallel with a pit alignment (Walker and Maull 2010, 49).

It is clear that a spatial relationship existed between the two original enclosures, which are suggested to be contemporary, and that more emphasis was being placed on the agricultural function of enclosure system at this time. There are many similar instances of the pairing of enclosures across the county where this seems to be

the case, often with the emphasis of enclosure initially focused on the functional aspect of stock control. For example, at Wakerley, seven unenclosed roundhouses were located to the N of the empty Enclosure B, and were subsequently enclosed; the new ditch circuit sharing one side (Jackson and Ambrose 1978, 118). Similarly at Grange Park, Courteenhall, a large sub-rectangular enclosure (Area 6, Enclosure 13) containing two roundhouses was paired with a slightly smaller but deeper enclosure (Enclosure 17) on opposite sides of a droveway (Jones 2006, 56).

The late Iron Age to Roman transition

The transition from the Iron Age to the Roman period in Northamptonshire is complex but it has been observed that changes were taking place in the landscape during the late Iron Age signalled by the appearance of Belgic-style pottery in the early decades of the 1st century AD (Foster 1999, 132–133).

This pottery is always present on Iron Age sites which then continue into the Roman period, suggesting that other sites are being abandoned at the end of the 1st millennium BC rather than at the time of the Roman Conquest. Excavations at Mawsley 3B have shown that the site was abandoned around the turn of the millennium, with only a single feature producing Belgic-style pottery (Hull and Preston 2002, 19).

However, settlement at Mawsley 6C/D clearly continued during this period. The enclosure pairing was replaced by a single enclosure with sub-divisions at its SW end containing the settlement foci, where continued replacement of timber roundhouses occurred. This period also saw expansion NE including a large enclosure and droveway, both indicative of intensified animal husbandry. Amongst examples of sites that also continue during this period, Mallard Close in Earls Barton saw the in-filling of the deep-ditched enclosure and its replacement by a completely new enclosure system with shallower ditches, which continued in use until the early 2nd century AD (Chapman and Atkins 2004, 55), whilst at Weekley, new enclosures and the remodelling of the existing ones was undertaken during this period (Jackson and Dix 1988, 49–50).

The early Roman enclosure

The infilling of the additional mid-late 1st century AD enclosure ditches and annexe around Enclosure 1, led to the establishment of a single enclosure almost twice the size of the original Iron Age structure (*c* 0.4ha), containing a single stone-founded roundhouse and associated wells and other structures. The presence of large ovens within the building pointed to a specialist function, but the plant evidence does not support the contention that there was a shift from animal husbandry to crop processing, but rather that there was a shift to a greater emphasis on sheep.

The succession of timber roundhouses by stone or stone-founded examples in the 2nd century AD is a feature of sites in the central part of Northamptonshire alongside the development of row type villas, whilst in the NE of the county they were replaced by aisled buildings and villas (Taylor 1999, 3). The county probably contains more Roman stone-built circular structures than any other county in England and represents the clear continuity of an Iron Age tradition into the Roman period (Keevill and Booth 1997, 31). Notable examples of this succession have been recorded at Stanwick (Neal 1989, 137), Overstone (Williams 1976, 108) and Thorplands (Hunter and Mynard 1977, 108). The function of circular stone buildings has been widely discussed and it seems likely that they served a variety of different purposes, determined by their structural/artefactual associations rather than the actual architecture of the building itself. These functions include domestic structures, ritual shrines, enclosure pens, agricultural storage sheds, as well as being used as industrial and agricultural workshops. On the basis of the features associated with the Mawsley example, a domestic and/or agricultural function seems most likely. Analysis of the use of space within these circular buildings demonstrates how the zoning of domestic and industrial or agricultural activities was achieved within a single structure (Taylor 2001, 51), and the partitioning of the Mawsley example, which at the back usually indicates private domestic space, is paralleled within Structure 369 at Redlands Farm, Stanwick (Keevill and Booth 1997, 25).

A single human burial has been attributed to this phase of activity, based on its association with an abandoned junction of the enclosure ditch (although it could also be later based on the wide radiocarbon date range). Small numbers of burials are often encountered on Roman rural sites in Northamptonshire (Taylor 1999, 7). This is a widespread pattern across much of Roman Britain and has been investigated in detail by Pearce. He concluded that burials in a Roman rural context are often found associated with boundary features, usually the ditches and gullies which defined settlement and other enclosures, but also field boundaries and occasionally landscape features of greater antiquity (1999, 158). It was shown that burials were commonly associated with 'deceased' features of differing degrees of antiquity. The Mawsley example fits this pattern of mortuary practice, perhaps performing a role in the 'rites of termination' for this element of the ditch system.

Later Roman activity

The enclosure was largely backfilled during the middle decades of the 2nd century AD. The landscape was re-organised and that there was little sign of occupation beyond the end of the 2nd century AD (although the actual dating of the features within Phase 5 is uncertain). This begs the question of what larger landscape issues are playing a part. The identification of a specific closure deposit (discussed in detail above) indicates a formal shift in the focus of settlement, but to where is uncertain. The occurrence of fragments of Roman tile within the upper fills of later features is the only clue that a well-appointed household may be located nearby.

These changes in settlement morphology have been recorded elsewhere in Northamptonshire during the 2nd

century AD, where settlements either become relocated from nearby predecessors or were new foundations, where rural settlement was being reorganised within an existing bounded landscape. During this period the villa at Redlands Farm was built along with the establishment of a large roadside settlement at Higham Ferrers (Mudd 2004) and the transformation of the settlement at Stanwick (Smith 2009, 313). On a smaller scale, similar settlement evolution to Mawsley has been recorded at Mallard Close, Earls Barton. Here the settlement form that had been re-organised in the 'Belgic' period was maintained until the early 2nd century AD. However, by the mid-2nd century AD the main enclosure ditches had become filled and little activity was recorded beyond this period apart from a large boundary wall that had been constructed along the southern extent of the excavation area. It is suggested that this represented a shift in domestic focus to the south, within a walled enclosure (Chapman and Atkins 2004, 55). A similar sequence was recorded at Weekley where the previous enclosure system continued to be in use until the late 1st century. By the 2nd century AD the original enclosures became in-filled and a trackway was constructed across the site with an associated enclosure pen. It was suggested that the main Roman settlement had shifted N where a villa complex was established, probably around the mid-2nd century (Jackson and Dix 1988, 62). At Glapthorn Road, Oundle the Iron Age settlement arrangement was maintained until the 2nd century. During the 3rd century the enclosure system was substantially expanded and the main focus of settlement shifted N. The wealth of the settlement continued to increase into the 4th century, culminating with the construction of a walled compound that probably enclosed a small villa complex (Maull and Masters 2004, 51–52). These examples all suggest a continued increase in wealth of the settlement inhabitants through the 2nd century that culminated in the construction of a villa/wealthy farmstead close to the earlier settlement focus.

The process of final abandonment of the site is unclear although the occurrence of early to mid-4th century coins within the later ditch systems provides some indication of date. The location of the settlement on the watershed at nearly 130m above sea-level places the site at one of the highest points in this part of the county, looking S and E towards the Nene and its tributaries and so it is likely to have been affected by the broad processes of nucleation in the later Roman period that have been detected in the large landscape surveys in the Nene Valley (Parry 2006) and the Welland Valley to the N (Liddle 1994; Bowman 1996), during which settlement becomes concentrated in valley bottoms and many watershed sites are abandoned, especially on marginal clayland geologies, as recorded here.

Anglo-Saxon burial

The presence of a prone male burial dating between the mid-6th and mid-7th centuries is paralleled by an isolated female prone burial found 50m south of the main cemetery group at Glapthorn Road, Oundle, where it was suggested that it represented an outcast (Maull and Masters 2004, 11). The Oundle cemetery was located within an enclosure dated to the 3rd century AD, indicating that the location still held significance for the indigenous population (Maull and Masters 2004, 10 and 53), and this factor may also explain the occurrence at Mawsley. Considering only modern excavations, over 50% of Anglo-Saxon burials occur on ancient sites that still featured in the landscape, notably Bronze Age barrows (Williams 1997, 4), and it is tempting to imagine that the upstanding remains of the stone roundhouse could have provided such a focus. Abandoned structures may also have been the location for the burial of 'bad' deaths (Williams 1997, 23), and the prone position of the Mawsley burial might also support this contention. Whilst prone burials make up only 0.5% of all early Anglo-Saxon interments (Reynolds 2009, 94), there is a clear concentration in the central South Midlands. The body position was chosen both to prevent the corpse returning, and so allay the fears of the living, and to mark the shame relating to the deceased (Harman, Molleson and Price 1981, 168). The occurrence of knives in such a burial is not considered unusual as they are most common objects found amongst the 23% of prone interments considered to be poorly furnished (Reynolds 2009, 72).

Conclusion

These excavations, along with previous work undertaken at the south end of the village, have identified two examples of settlement on clayland geologies prior to the Romano-British period. There is emerging evidence of more extensive exploitation by the later 1st millennium BC of the boulder clay zone of this region (Clay 2002; Mills and Palmer 2007). The settlement fits into the pattern recorded on the boulder clay plateau by the Raunds Area Survey. Here, gradual in-filling occurred during the late Iron Age period, continuing beyond the Roman Conquest, with settlements consisting predominantly of small dispersed farms (Parry 2006, 76). This pattern continued until the early 4th century when changes were recorded within the wider landscape. During this period there appears to have been a reduction in the number of clayland farms that coincided with nucleation of larger settlements, mainly in the river valleys.

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